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AHP 64 CHANGING LIVES: AN A MDO PASTORAL TIBETAN FAMILY by Sgrol ma yag

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by

Sgrol ma yag

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ཨ་མདོའི་འབྲོག་ཕྱེམ་ཞིག་གི་འཚོ་བའི་འགྱུར་ལྡོག

by

སྒྲོལ་མ་ཡག Sgrol ma yag (卓玛优 Zhuomayou)

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FRONT COVER: My family's winter pasture adobe house. The horses are behind the house after Father drove them from a neighbor's fenced grassland in the morning after they had run away at night. They were full and waiting before going to the mountains. The sun has already risen above the eastern mountains. I took this picture after I checked if the yaks were still on the mountains where we had left them there for two days (2019, Sgrolma yag).

BACK COVER: Our family's dog, Dom phrug, at dusk in our winter pasture (2018, Sgrolma yag).

COVER DESIGN: 'Jam dbyangs skyabs འཇམ་དབྱངས་སྐྱབས།

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My sincere thanks to all those who made this book possible. To my family, mentor, and friends, your unwavering support and encouragement have been my foundation. To my editors and publishers, thank you for your invaluable guidance and belief in my work.

ACCLAIM

Changing Lives by Sgrol ma yag encapsulates a profound reservoir of cultural knowledge and personal observations, bearing witness to a rapidly evolving way of life. This narrative testifies to the diverse nomadic traditions of the Tibetan people as they undergo extreme shifts from children enrolling in urban schools, the implementation of the 'Nomad Settlement Policy,' the surge in tourism, rapid urbanization, and the pervasive influence of a market-driven lifestyle, among others. The accompanying photographs are priceless artifacts, contributing to the preservation of Tibetan nomad history. As someone from a similar community in A mdo, I know and have personally experienced Tibetan herding life and its ongoing changes. The text delves into the significance of place names, the intricate connections between animals, the earth, and the herders themselves, as well as the material objects cherished within the Rgyab lung Community. These details sum up extraordinary ways of life progressively fading away, overshadowed by the relentless forces of capitalism and escalating urbanization on a global scale.

-Sanggay Tashi (Sangs rgyas bkra shis སངས་རྒྱས་བཀྲ་ཤིས།),
University of Colorado-Boulder

Changing Lives: An Amdo Pastoral Tibetan Family is a valuable account of the transformations experienced by author Sgrol ma yag's (Zhuomayou's) family and home community from the 1950s to 2020s. Divided into three parts, the book explores the daily lives of the author's family, the experiences of her elder brother, and the complex, multifaceted world of Tibetan women's ornaments in her home Rgyab lung (Jialong) Community in Rta nag ma (Heimahe) Township, Mtsho sngon (Qinghai) Province, China. Sgrol ma yag's vivid storytelling and inclusion of striking photographs masterfully depict changes that have shaped her family and community. She offers a glimpse into the lives of her mother, grandmother, sister, and female friends through their heartfelt stories and experiences. Photographs accompany descriptions of various aspects of Tibetan life including house

chores, herding, livestock, schooling, rituals, foraging, clothing, and ornaments. Including photographs and tables showcasing yaks and horses further enhances the book's appeal, providing readers with an exemplary model of documenting and presenting cultural traditions through visual representation. This compelling work offers profound insight into the dynamics of Tibetan life and is an important documentation of A mdo pastoral life, particularly in the early 21st century.

-Tshe dbang rdo rje ཚེདབང་རྡོརྗེ (Caixiangduojie 才项多杰)
Qinghai Normal University 青海师范大学

Sgrol ma yag's *Changing Lives: An Amdo Pastoral Tibetan Family* showcases a rapidly evolving Tibetan nomadic tribal community near Qinghai Lake, providing a valuable reference for the impacts of global climate change, environmental protection efforts, economic development, and policies aimed at preserving cultural heritage. The author accomplishes this by documenting three generations of a herding family living near Qinghai Lake, highlighting significant changes in their way of life, including customs, aesthetic tastes, livestock composition, and numbers, attributed to the aforementioned factors.

Details that drew my attention include instances of sheep, unable to distinguish between land and lake, running on thin ice that broke, sending them plunging into Qinghai Lake where they drowned during a blizzard. Such situations are described as *dmag' drogs* 'night startle,' evoking personal memories of terrified sheep running in every direction near my family's tent at night. Additionally, the author portrays the strict schedule of a herding woman's busy daily summer routine starting at four a.m., providing insight into the similar lives of women in my home area.

I am also impressed by the author's parents' perception of their livestock and sense of home. They say they feel warmth and belonging wherever their livestock are, giving that place a sense of home. Despite the family's contemporary dependence on yaks under the influence of environmental protection policies, they remain optimistic and aspirational, seeking new income streams through tourist shops and tent hotels, and improving livestock

quality through livestock enclosures and providing supplemental fodder. Rapid change is inevitable, driven in part by the influence of social media on the local population. Examples include Sgrol ma yag's brother choosing dance as a career, the family remaking heavy traditional ornaments into smaller, lighter versions, and people dyeing and curling their hair. While acknowledging these changes, I hope they do not erode the warm relationships between family members, reminiscent of the joy of receiving new clothes and visiting neighbors during Lo sar 'Tibetan New Year'.

With humor and remarkable insight, this valuable book by the young Tibetan daughter of yak herders offers an extremely informed, firsthand account of lived realities in her rapidly changing tribal community.

-Rigdrol Jikar (Rig grol རིག་སྒྲོལ། Rou Zhuo 肉卓)
Qinghai Normal University 青海师范大学

In the intricate tapestry of time, memories are markers of our journey, reflecting the paths we've traversed and illuminating the way forward. *Changing Lives: An A mdo Pastoral Tibetan Family* by Sgrol ma yag goes beyond a mere record of familial reminiscences; it is a poignant tribute to the vibrant tapestry of Tibetan heritage in its embrace of people, culture, animals, and rituals before they slip away into the recesses of history. This compelling narrative speaks directly to the soul, inviting readers to step into the shoes of those who walked before, offering a profound connection to a fading world and the enduring power of remembrance.

-Klu rgyal 'bum ཀླུ་རྒྱལ་འབུམ། Northwestern University

…vividly portrays the daily life of a Tibetan herding family caught between preserving ancestral practices and embracing the conveniences and attractions of a rapidly changing world as the winds of modernity sweep the Plateau.

-Huadan Zhaxi (Dpal ldan bkra shis དཔལ་ལྡན་བཀྲ་ཤིས།)
Humboldt-Universität zu Berlin

Sgrol ma yag's vivid description of her family using narration,

description, and photographs reveals the lived experiences of three generations in a nomadic community near Qinghai Lake. A young woman in her twenties, the author keenly observes and records women's lives and her family's daily life at different times. The original photos speak for themselves, authentically depicting nomadic life and adding to the value of *Changing Lives: An Amdo Pastoral Tibetan Family*. This is an important read for anyone interested in Tibetan life on the Plateau, particularly the life of nomad women.

-Lhamodrolma ལྷ་མོ་གྲོལ་མ།

An A mdo Pastoral Tibetan Family by a daughter of the studied family narrates the nuances of changing lives of local pastoralists from a native perspective. Well-crafted non-fiction based on authentic lives speaks to issues of major concern and is a brilliant read, offering a fresh perspective on modernity, progress, and tradition.

-Caihuan Duojie (Caihua Dorji; Tshe dpal rdo rje ཚེ་དཔལ་རྡོ་རྗེ།)
Qinghai Minzu University

Sgrol ma yag, a young Tibetan woman whose family has been herding by Qinghai Lake in western China for generations, was born on the grassland and herded yaks, sheep, and horses with her family. The generous quantity of introductory materials on Qinghai Lake in various languages promoting tourism development generally ignores local herders' lives, which this book focuses on, making the book a valuable resource for readers to understand local Tibetan culture better. This grassland and mountain domain is illustrated with stories of the author's ancestors, detailing past and contemporary daily lives including diet, fetching water, roasting and grinding barley with hand mills, and dairy product (butter, buttermilk, cheese) production; crafting skin robes, clothing, and various ornaments; religious practice and implements; local houses and tents; foraging for mushrooms, landscapes, weather, and weddings; treating yak and sheep parasites, yak eye disease, and livestock limb fractures; watchdogs, horses, deer, deer antlers, and encounters with wolves;

the author's elder brother's experience with dance education and life as a dancer; her sister's elopement; and details of the family's regular moves between pastures. A generous number of well-captioned photos add to the reader's interest. *Changing Lives: An A mdo Pastoral Family* also has moments of sadness at the decreasing number of yaks and sheep for various reasons, the gradual abandonment of traditional clothing and ornaments, young herders increasingly moving to urban areas, and the disappearance of traditional grassland herding culture in the face of rapid globalization and technological change. Sgrol ma yag's book is an important example of how local herders can save a precious record of their lives and culture.

-Limusishiden (Li Dechun 李得春),
Qinghai University Affiliated Hospital

Sgrol ma yag offers a window into the rapidly transforming lives of a Tibetan pastoral herding community in the A mdo Tibetan region near Qinghai Lake and highlights the urgent need for cultural documentation. Rich ethnographic storytelling and details of ordinary life provide rarely presented perspectives into the lives, culture, and structural dynamics shaping this resilient community. By documenting indigenous knowledge and perspectives rooted in pastoral traditions, this book is an inspiration in telling the story of a family adapting to current challenges while preserving customs essential to unity and survival. Relatable characters and expressive prose detail the challenges of today's realities and make a strong case for recognizing the humanity in pastoral A mdo.

-Chos skyong skyabs ཆོས་སྐྱོང་སྐྱབས། (Qiejiangjia 切江加)
National University - Manila

Changing Lives: An A mdo Pastoral Tibetan Family takes us to a nomad world near Koknor (Qinghai Lake) where the author's tribe, relatives, and family and their livestock and wildlife live. Born in the 1990s, Sgrol ma yag's knowledge of the life she describes is obvious from living on the grassland and in the mountains all her life, except for time spent pursuing higher education in urban

areas. Her ethnographically thick descriptions provide vivid details on herding, seasonal movements, daily chores, foraging, assisting neighbors, naming livestock, treating ill livestock, local ornaments, fuel collection and storage, religious rituals, and wearing ornaments from emic perspectives enlightening us on rarely discussed aspects of herding life in the late 20th and early 21st centuries.

While this book's narratives may seem distant from readers, they are nonetheless close in time and space since they are ongoing. However, readers are reminded that nomadic life is changing dramatically.

Sgrol ma yag's photos and captions provide new insight into the context of the change, which may not be as linear and uniliteral as imagined. The transition the author depicts is not a simple replacement of the old tradition with a new one; rather, the tradition is moving towards a neo-tradition. This is obvious in clothes and ornaments that are critical to engagements, weddings, and other festive grassland occasions. This book is rich in ethnographic data that requires further research, as Sgrol ma yag reminds us:

Local women think [now] just one or two coral necklaces are fine and that imitation coral necklaces are better because they are stylish, attractive, and cheap. These ongoing changes indicate that social value and practices regarding coral are increasingly fluid, especially with widespread access to social media that impacts what is considered trendy and the availability of low-priced, imitation products that closely resemble authentic coral.

As a recently circulated cliché on social media goes: "Happy herding!" to the author and her family as they diversify their income streams and embrace more sustainable herding practices.

-Nyingbo Gyal སྙིང་བོ་རྒྱལ། Qinghai Minzu University

Changing Lives presents valuable firsthand material on pastoral Tibetan life in the early 2020s in a rapidly changing Amdo herding community in northwest China, using the author's family to provide daily life details, including their livestock, herding practices, traditional knowledge of flora and fauna, ways of healing livestock, grassland degradation, government restriction of livestock numbers, and coping mechanisms for alternative income generation, e.g., collection and sale of deer antlers. Access to school education and the accessibility of outside social influences encourages youths to abandon traditional livelihoods for more convenient, modern lives, fundamentally altering individual attitudes, values, and practices and the collective identity of an ethnic group. Numerous photos with detailed explanations, charts, and non-English word lists enable readers to understand the contents better. Highly recommended and made more important by the young woman's life experiences as a pastoralist and member of the family she writes about.

-Kelsang Norbu (Gesang Norbu, Skal bzang nor bu སྐལ་བཟང་ནོར་བུ།)

Changing Lives: An A mdo Pastoral Tibetan Family offers a detailed description of significant transformations occurring on the Qinghai-Tibet Plateau in China due to the region's integration into national and global economies. These alterations, observed at personal, familial, and communal levels, are pronounced in the study area surrounding Qinghai Lake, a cultural and economic center of Amdo, due to a boom in tourism, increased human activities, and climate change.

The narrative presents a complex perspective into social and religious rituals, everyday life, livestock naming practices, and characteristics of various animals, their treatment, and dairy products; and the captivating portrayal of Tibetan herders' relationships with yaks, sheep, horses, deer, and dogs, as well as interactions with ornaments, plants, and the natural environment. These detailed descriptions provide insight into the evolving realities faced by herders, marked by uncertainty and hope.

Globally, the agricultural sector is shrinking in its share of the economy, attributed to increased productivity and reduced

employment due to technological advancements. This shift is a critical challenge to traditional pastoralism's conventional practices of dispersed, free-range herding, which is at a critical crossroads. In the competitive marketplace, traditional pastoralism struggles, particularly when compared with intensive farming methods that produce cheaper livestock products. This situation is exacerbated when traditional livestock products, known for their organic and green qualities, fail to be effectively marketed with transparent information and pricing.

Sgrol ma yag observes fewer Tibetan family members engaged in herding, a trend accelerated in recent years by new policies and internet access, among other factors. Moreover, local livestock products are vulnerable to price volatility, a trend obvious throughout 2023 with the influx of competitively priced, high-quality mutton imports from Australia and New Zealand that Tibetan herders find it increasingly difficult to compete with, signaling a profound shift in the economic landscape and, consequently, a transformation of traditional landscapes and Tibetan herders' livelihoods.

Changing Lives is a testament to the inescapable changes affecting traditional pastoralism in the local economic landscape, aesthetics, ornaments, and clothing. The widespread availability and live streaming of information on social media further amplify these changes. For better or worse, these changes are occurring at an unprecedented pace. Herders' future resilience and adaptability to these shifts remain uncertain, highlighting a critical issue.

-Nyangchak, SOAS University of London

Changing Lives: An A mdo Pastoral Tibetan Family leads us into the heart of Tibetan herding life, introducing us to the intricate tapestry of an Amdo Tibetan family's daily existence, illuminating profound transformations sparked by economic shifts, policy changes, and the inexorable march of modernity. In Part One, Sgrol ma yag narrates her family's changing daily lives using vivid portraits of people, landscapes they inhabit, and careful rituals related to housing, animals, and rituals, immersing readers in the

vibrant tapestry of pastoral existence. Seasonal migrations from winter to spring pastures, documented through photographs of animals, capture life tied to the land.

Part Two introduces us to the author's brother, whose passion for dance takes him from his grassland home to urban Zi ling and Lanzhou. This demonstrates the new opportunities and choices available to pastoral youth.

Part Three focuses on the intricate world of Tibetan women's ornaments in the Rgyab lung Community, weaving accounts of personal experiences, the significance of ornaments, and their transfer within the community.

In poignantly exploring the nuanced interplay between tradition and change, Sgrol ma yag offers readers windows into the lives of those navigating the complexities of a changing Tibetan pastoral existence in the early second decade of the 21st century, made more valuable by its attention to women and their lives.

-Snying dkar rgyal སྙིང་དཀར་རྒྱལ། (Nianggajia 娘尕加)
Qinghai Minzu University

Embark on an intimate visit to contemporary Tibetan pastoralism with Sgrol ma yag, a young Tibetan woman from a historically nomadic A mdo family, as she unveils the tapestry of grassland life through vivid language and a gallery of evocative photographs. Her family's most educated member, she weaves together the fabric of pre-modern Tibetan life in the Mtsho sngon po (Qinghai Lake) region with its everyday rituals, beliefs, remarkable connections between humanity and nature, the complex dynamics of daily life determined by gender and generational roles, and gradual changes in occupations, dress, and habitation.

Amid arresting portrayals lies a poignant truth - the inevitable transition from centuries-old pastoralism to modern practices. Witness the bittersweet transformation, encapsulated in the heartfelt selling of cherished livestock in 2022, in sharp contrast to the younger generation's flight to bustling urban landscapes in pursuit of new income-earning pursuits.

The heart of *Changing Lives: An A mdo Pastoral Tibetan*

Family beats with devotion to more than mere livelihood. Yaks and other livestock transcend being mere commodities, embodying a vital essence of pastoralism - a complicated cultural link binding people to their environment. Pastoralism is about both rearing animals AND fostering a profound connection with nature — a connection now at a crossroads of preservation and transformation.

-'Brug mo skyid འབྲུག་མོ་སྐྱིད། (Zhoumaoji 周毛吉),
International Institute of Social Studies,
Erasmus University Rotterdam

Sgrol ma yag's *Changing Lives: An Amdo Pastoral Tibetan Family* invites reflection on the impact of "progress" in its insights into a community embracing resilience amidst transformative currents. Witness the personal stories of the author's family in the backdrop of herding life near Qinghai Lake in an unfolding artful narrative illustrating the profound transition from nomadism to the nuanced challenges of modern life. Navigating the delicate balance between tradition and modernity, spirituality and materialism, established cultural beliefs, and modern values, the book delves into the clash of meanings and importance in a society undergoing radical change.

-Li Jianfu 李建富, Qinghai Normal University 青海师范大学

NOTES

[1] All photographs were taken by the author unless otherwise noted.
[2] Figures and photographs are numbered consecutively in CONTENTS as they appear in the text.
[3] Local Tibetans generally use the Chinese lunisolar calendar. I use "month" for convenience.
[4] See Table 3 for Tibetan terms my parents use that may not appear in Tibetan dictionaries.

Duojie Zhaxi (Rdo rje bkra shis རྡོ་རྗེ་བཀྲ་ཤིས།)
Qinghai Minzu University

Across China, as in other parts of the world, language, lifestyle, and many other aspects of culture are undergoing profound shifts in a rapidly changing society. The diverse traditions of the Tibetan people are no exception. In acknowledgment, *Changing Lives: An Amdo Pastoral Tibetan Family* offers a nuanced exploration of the evolving dynamics within a Tibetan herding community near Kokonor (Qinghai Lake) on the northeastern Tibetan Plateau in Amdo. Drawing on her personal experiences and those of her family members and ancestors in what Clifford Geertz (1973) terms "thick description," Sgrol ma yag encapsulates the daily activities and cultural practices of a Tibetan family deeply rooted in pastoral traditions amid significant transformations driven by external factors, including government policies, economic development, urbanization, and global influences.

This nuanced ethnographic account vividly traverses a journey through time and tradition, detailing Tibetan herding practices, seasonal movements, daily chores, and community interactions. It provides non-academic readers with a lively picture of Tibetan life on the Plateau. Striking photographs and personal anecdotes further enrich Sgrol ma yag's storytelling, presenting rapidly changing Tibetan cultural traditions through visual representation, making this an exemplary model of scholarly ethnographic writing and heartfelt memoir.

Her description of the implementation of policies such as the 'Nomad Settlement Policy' and the rise of tourism shows how drastically these measures altered Tibetan herders' way of life, underscoring her community's resilience as they navigate these shifts, finding new ways to sustain their livelihoods while maintaining connections to their ancestral land. Another significant aspect is her exploration of Tibetan women’s lives and their cultural artifacts. Sgrol ma yag provides an intimate look at the aesthetics and significance of these ornaments, tracing their

origins and evolution over time. These profound changes are reflected in the author's family, who have had to adapt to new economic opportunities while striving to preserve their cultural heritage.

As someone born and raised in an Amdo Tibetan farming community, I was not fully engaged in herding activities, so I did not personally experience the profound transformations of traditional Tibetan herding lifestyles. However, the author's nuanced exploration of the significant changes in Tibetan herding life realistically captures similar changes in Tibetan farming areas. Her work prompts me to reflect on the lasting impact of replacing organic manure with synthetic fertilizers and hand-held sickles with petroleum-driven combines. Locals' laughter and songs rising from the fields have now been muffled by the rumble and screech of machines. I am also struck by the rapid change in Tibetan farming life in food production and distribution, transportation, rituals, and communication. A once vibrant community characterized by regular intimate daily contact has been profoundly affected by a new sense of loneliness due to the convenience of cell phones and the Internet. Adding to this sense of isolation, Sgrol ma yag observes, many community members now spend much of the year working in urban areas rather than engaging with their livestock or fields and social groups as they once did. To address such issues, the nuanced ethnographic approach employed by Sgorl ma yag provides a more complex picture.

Another remarkable contribution of this book lies in current mainstream academic scholarship requiring empirically grounded and theoretically speculative pieces designed for scholarly debate within larger academic communities. The works of Charlene Makley (2018), Andrew Fischer (2013), and a recent study by Andrew Grant (2022) are well-known ethnographic studies in Western academic literature, analyzing how social, cultural, political, and economic changes shape the lives of Tibetan populations in Amdo and how Tibetans, in turn, respond to those changes. These works significantly contribute to Tibetan Studies and the broader academic community with their theoretical

approaches. However, it is challenging for those without higher academic training to capture the framework of such approaches fully. This, of course, does not diminish the value of theoretical analysis. Theories as analytical tools are extremely important in academia for better understanding and analyzing unanswered questions that often lead to new scholarly debates. In this respect, Sgrol ma yag is an exemplary representative of a young Tibetan native scholar whose work provides a rich, grounded, and accessible understanding of contemporary Tibetan cultures and societies through documenting the lived experiences of Tibetan individuals and community in Amdo. This approach offers insights that might be overlooked or simplified in more theoretical analyses and aims to enhance understanding and appreciation of Tibetan culture among a broader range of readers.

Amdo's ethnically complex region in the northeastern borderlands of the Tibetan cultural area challenges scholars, both local and from "outside," to unpack and carefully analyze the changes in Amdo today, particularly those driven by political factors. In this context, rich ethnographies such as Sgrol ma yag's provide a partial remedy by providing descriptive accounts of the social-cultural transformations ongoing in Amdo today. Such work lays the groundwork for future theoretical exploration and analysis. Sgrol ma yag deserves much credit and gratitude from all of us interested in Tibetan culture and society for her ethnographic work and approaches.

Changing Lives: An Amdo Pastoral Tibetan Family's detailed and beautiful portrayal of Tibetan pastoral life significantly contributes to the field of ethnography by addressing the major concerns and profound changes Tibetan communities face in the 21st century. Sgrol ma yag's meticulous documentation is a must-read for anyone interested in Tibetan culture, pastoralism, and the broader impacts of globalization on indigenous communities. As readers journey through the pages of this book, they will gain a deeper appreciation for the intricate tapestry of Tibetan pastoral life and the enduring spirit of a community facing profound change.

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CONTENTS

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS <4>
ACCLAIM <5>
PREFACE by Duojie Zhaxi (Rdo rje bkra shis རྡོ་རྗེ་བཀྲ་ཤིས།) <15>
CONTENTS <19>
INTRODUCTION <26>
PART ONE: AN A MDO PASTORAL TIBETAN FAMILY'S CHANGING DAILY LIVES <34>
LOCATION <35>
1 Rgyab lung Community, Mtsho sngon (Qinghai) Province. <35>
2 Family pastures. <35>
TABLE 1. PEOPLE <36>
TABLE 2. PLACE NAMES <38>
TABLE 3. COLLOQUIAL TIBETAN TERMS <40>
FAMILY <41>
3 Gnam skyid yag (maternal grandmother, 2019). <43>
4 Tshe brtan rgyal (Father, ~2013). <44>
5 Sgrol ma mtsho (Mother, 2017). <46>
6 Klu mo tshe ring (Sister, ~2008). <48>
7 Tshe ring lhun 'grub and Phag mo rdo rje (2017). <50>
8 'Brug lha rgyal (Brother, 2020). <52>
9 Sgrol ma yag (self, ~2007). <53>
HOUSING <58>
10 Winter pasture adobe house (2019). <60>
11 Autumn pasture tent (~2018). <60>
12 Spring pasture house (2019). <61>
13 Klu mo's family tent in the summer pasture (2020). <61>
ANIMALS <62>
LIFE <63>
- MORNING <63>
- AFTER BREAKFAST <64>
- AFTER LUNCH <67>

- FATHER AND I MOVE FROM THE WINTER PASTURE TO THE SPRING PASTURE <68>

HERDING YAKS ON THE SUMMER PASTURE <75>
- GRASSLAND GUARDS <85>
- AN ANGRY GUARD <85>

PHOTOGRAPHS: ANIMALS <88>
- YAKS <88>
  14 Rgya tho ma and her calf, Rgya rus (2020). <88>
  15 Sre tho ma (2020). <89>
  16 Dpal ldan lha mo (2021). <90>
  17 Rgya ling ma with an amulet (2022). <91>
  18 Rgya ring ma (2022). <92>
  19 'Dzi mo (2021). <93>
  20 Gwa tho ma (2021). <94>
  21 Rnga lo ma (2022). <95>
  22 Nag tho ma (2022). <96>
  23 Srung rtags ma (2019). <97>
  24 Gwa ldang ma (2021). <98>
  25 Mtshe ge ma (2021). <99>
  26 Rog ldang ma (2022). <100>
  27 Sre tho (2021). <101>
  28 Gwa ling (2021). <102>
  29 G.yag rgan dkar ldang (2021). <103>
  30 Mgon g.yag (2019). <104>
  31 Dung mgo ma (2021). <105>
  32 Piercing Dung mgo ma's horns (2021). <106>
  33 Sngo ldu ma (2021). <107>
  34 Rgya tho (2021). <108>
  35 Rgya ling (2021). <109>
  36 A black calf ate grass tangled with yak hair (2022). <110>
  37 'Go be'u (2022). <111>
  38 Bag ldu rgya ling (2019). <112>
- HORSES <113>
  39 Rta nag ldang (2020). <113>
  40 Rgye'u nag ldang (2020). <114>
  41 Rgod ma rkyang ldang ma (2019). <115>
  42 Rkyang ldang (2020). <116>

- SHEEP <117>
  43 Khya gzhis ma (2022). <117>
  44 Caring for a disabled ewe (2021). <118>
  45 Feeding barley to lambs (2021). <119>
  46 A lamb sleeps on its mother's back (2021). <119>
  47 Ewe with a broken leg (2021). <120>
  48 A ewe's twins (2020). <121>
- DEER <121>
  49 Deer (2021). <122>
  50 A deer antler (2021). <123>
  51 Klu mo's family's watchdog (2021). <123>
- DOM PHRUG <124>
  52 Dom phrug (2015). <125>

PASTORAL MOVES <126>
- 53 Overnight on a rocky mountain side (2019) <126>
- 54 Father saddles horses (2019) <127>
- 55 Boiling tea on a stone hearth (2017) <128>

FORAGING <128>
- MUSHROOMS <128>
  56 Collecting mushrooms (2019). <130>
- *GO THOG* 'CUMIN' SEED <130>
- NETTLES <131>

LIVESTOCK TREATMENT <131>
- PARASITES <131>
- YAK EYE TREATMENT <132>
- CHAGS' JOG PA 'HEALING FRACTURED LIMBS' <132>

RELIGIOUS RITUALS <133>
- RI BSANG 'OFFERING INCENSE ON THE MOUNTAINS' <134>
- *SKAR MA A BRTAN RGYAL PORBCOL PA* <135>
- *SRUNG KHA GSO PA* <136>
- *LHA MO'I BSKANG BA* <137>
  57 A khu rgyal mtshan chants Lha mo'i bskang ba (2022). <137>
- *SA DPAR* <138>
  58 Sa dpar (2022). <138>
- *CHU DPAR* <139>
  59 Chu dpar (2022). <139>

60 Tsha kong (2022). <140>
- *BSANG* <141>
  61 Sgo bsang (2020). <141>
  62 Tsha gsur (2021). <142>
- *MCHOD PA MCHOD ME* <142>
  63 Mchod me (2019). <142>
  64 Mchod pa bshams pa (2019). <143>

HOME CHORES <144>
- *ONG SPUNGS* <144>
  65 Ong spungs (2020). <146>
- *LCI LEB* <147>
  66 Lci leb (2022). <147>
- FETCHING WATER <148>
  67 Fetching water (2020). <148>
- ROASTING AND GRINDING BARLEY <149>
  68 Nas brngo pa (2021). <149>
  69 Hand mill for grinding barley (2021). <150>
- SEPARATING MILK <150>
  70 Milk separator (2021). <151>
- MAKING CHEESE <152>
  71 Filtering cheese (2021). <152>

VISITING <152>
72 A neighbor makes sheepskin robes (2019). <154>
73 Gyang 'dzin churns milk (2019). <155>
74 A ce 'brug mo dries cheese (2019). <155>

CONCLUSION <156>

PART TWO: 'BRUG LHA RGYAL - TIBETAN DANCER <157>
- HERDING EXPERIENCES BEFORE ATTENDING SCHOOL <158>
- STARTING SCHOOL <159>
- DANCE SCHOOL IN ZI LING (XINING) CITY <161>
- LIFE AT THE DANCE INSTITUTE, NORTHWEST NATIONALITIES UNIVERSITY, LAN GRU <164>
  75 Siblings (~1997). <165>
  76 'Brug lha rgyal with a paternal relative and a cousin's wife (~1995). <166>

77 'Brug lha rgyal with a cousin and a friend in Mtsho lho (~2004). <167>
78 'Brug lha rgyal with classmates in Zi ling (~2007). <168>
79 'Brug lha rgyal and his friends after celebrating Teacher's Day (~2007). <169>
80 During Nadamu (2009). <170>
81 'Brug lha rgyal and Nuo opera (2010). <170>
82 After the Third Ethnic Minority Art Show (2010). <171>
83 After a show in Beijing (2010). <171>
84 'Brug lha rgyal and friends in Beijing (2010). <172>
85 After the “The Old Man” performance (2010). <172>
86 'Brug lha rgyal with a friend (2010). <173>
87 Sand dance (2013). <173>
88 A group dance performance (2013). <174>
89 Dance competition rehearsal (2014). <174>
90 'Brug lha rgyal with classmates in college (2014). <175>
91 Princess Wencheng (2015). <175>
92 After performing Princess Wencheng (2015). <176>
93 Tibetan and Tang armies (2015). <177>
94 Mongolian dance (2015). <177>
95 At home (2015). <178>
96 'Brug lha rgyal with a teacher and classmates (2015). <179>
97 During a college final exam (2016). <179>
98 Dance practice (2016). <180>
99 A football Team (2016). <181>
100 Performing “Snowland Heroes” (2017). <181>

PART THREE: TIBETAN WOMEN'S ORNAMENTS IN RGYAB LUNG (JIALONG) COMMUNITY. <182>

- INTRODUCTION <183>
- ORNAMENTS <184>
- TABLE 4. IMAGES AND DESCRIPTIONS OF ORNAMENTS FEATURED IN THE TEXT <184>

- PERSONAL ACCOUNTS <187>
- TRANSFER OF ORNAMENTS <191>
- CONCLUSION <191>

101 *Glo gzar char mgo ma* (2020). <192>
102 *Glo gzar tshe ri jan* (2020). <193>
103 Bsod nams bde skyid wears a *dmar gdan* (2019). <194>
104 *Rna lung* (2020). <195>
105 *Ja la* (2020). <195>
106 Sgrol ma yag (2020). <195>
107 Mkha' mo yag (2020). <195>
108 Coral *skag bcing* (2020). <196>
109 Sgrol ma yag's mother's coral *skag bcing*. <196>
110 Sgrol ma yag wears her mother's *dmar gdan* (2019). <197>
111 Sgrol ma yag's mother's *dmar gdan* (2019). <198>
112 Klum o tshe ring (~2003). <199>
113 Imitation ornaments for sale during Lo sar (2018).<200>
114 *Dung* (2019). <201>
115 Klu mo tshe ring (2020). <202>
116 Sgrol ma mtsho (~2006). <203>
117 Klu mo tshe ring wears her coral *skag bcing* (2017). <204>
118 *Shing ma mo'i mig* (2020). <205>
119 *Dngul 'dzub* (2020). <205>
120 Coral *rna lung* (2020). <205>
121 Coral necklace (2020). <205>
122 *Tsheg bstar* (2020). <206>
123 *Skying khab* (2019). <207>
124 New style *glo gzar* (2019). <208>
125 Imitation coral necklace (2020). <209>
126 Bsod nams bde skyid wears her mother's coral *skag bcing* (2020). <210>
127 *Me cha* (2020). <211>
128 Silver *skag bcing* (2020). <212>
129 Silver ring (2020). <212>
130 *Skying khab* (2018). <212>
131 *Bsgrig gdan* (2019). <213>

CONCLUSION <213>
APPENDIX: LIVESTOCK TERMS <215>
- TABLE 5. YAKS <215>
- TABLE 6. HORSES <217>
- TABLE 7. SHEEP <217>

REFERENCES <218>
TIBETAN TERMS <219>
CHINESE TERMS <225>

INTRODUCTION

Rta nag ma (Heimahe) Township offices are in Heimahe. In 2020, it had two main roads lined with several stores. Most other buildings were tourist hotels, owing to the proximity of Mtsho sngon po (Qinghai Lake). The five-grade Rta nag ma Boarding Primary School with some 400 students from Rgyab lung (Jialong), Bum pa (Wenba), and Brag mchog (Zhihequ) communities, is also located here. This school offers classes taught in the Chinese and Tibetan languages. Consequently, Han residents of Ra 'khyog (Ranhequ) Village generally send their children to the Gser chen (Gonghe) County Town for schooling.

In 2020, Rgyab lung Community had a population of about 1,197 (335 households). Community households historically moved between summer, winter, spring, and autumn pastures, and winter and spring pastures were divided among households.

Yearly, the local community witnessed changes, including implementing new policies to protect the grasslands and wildlife, as mentioned above. For instance, in 2022, community leaders introduced a policy making it illegal to collect deer antlers, which had previously served as income for locals. This regulation was implemented because hunters killed deer in the winter pasture once locals moved to their summer pasture. The hunters killed the deer, removed the antlers, and abandoned the carcasses. When locals returned in winter, they found many dead deer minus their antlers. To address this issue, the collection and purchase of antlers were strictly banned.

Additionally, around 2014, the importance of tourism had a profound impact on the mindset of the local community regarding survival. Traditionally, herding was perceived as the sole livelihood. However, with the active promotion of local tourism during that period, people began recognizing its economic opportunities. As a result, some locals started exploring alternative income sources through tourism-related activities, establishing small shops to sell local products, and setting up tent hotels to cater to tourists. These initiatives offered horseback riding and yak rides that generated income.

Minimal precipitation also affects local people. In 2021,

one household in a neighboring community lost around 500 sheep from less grass, frightening many locals. Most families in my home community bought hay the following year to better prepare for disaster. Overgrazing is one factor explaining less grass in my home community.

▪▪▪

Fast-forward to 2023. This book aims to document the transformation of my family's herding lifestyle, capturing past and current experiences. As my home community moves away from traditional herding practices, I aim to preserve the memories and essence of our way of life. I notice aspects of our family's traditions slipping away each time I return home, including changes in local traditional attire and ornaments and wearing robes and trendy accessories popularized on social media. Additionally, my knowledge of counting yak ages and naming livestock, once proficient, is gradually fading.

In the first part of this book, I introduce my close family members and my family's daily life, including herding, seasonal movements, interaction with neighbors and other local people, and daily house chores, to provide an overview of my family's herding lifestyle.

I also want to provide my family's experience today. The sale of livestock in 2022 marked a significant turning point for my family and our community. For generations, herding yaks has been the foundation of our traditional way of life, providing us with food, clothing, and income. However, with changing times and new policies to protect the grasslands, our way of life faces challenges, and the future of herding in our community is uncertain.

Before my family stopped herding sheep in 2008, my family's daily routine differed from today. For instance, when we were in the summer pasture, Father left our home for several days to attend local meetings and take care of family business, such as going to the County Town to buy items and visiting relatives living far from us as a family head. Mother then replaced Father in caring for the family. We had no sheep enclosures in the summer pasture, making it easy for predators to attack the sheep, especially on rainy

and foggy nights when sheep searched for places with less mud. Mother spent time on such nights preventing the sheep from escaping. She began milking at around four AM. Sister got up around five-thirty to help Mother. Around eight AM, after they finished milking, Sister drove the milk yaks to the mountains while Mother prepared breakfast. After breakfast, Sister herded sheep and yaks in the mountains, and Brother and I herded the yak calves, keeping them away from their mothers.

Mother had to do all the house chores - fetch water, collect yak dung, churn milk, etc. When Father returned, Mother's duties were easier. For example, they took turns checking the sheep's safety at night.

Maternal grandmother also described an adult herding woman's busy daily life during summer when the women milked the yaks twice daily and churned the milk to make cheese every day to prevent spoilage:

A herding woman's day in the summer began around four AM when I was a young mother. My husband and I lived with his parents. I woke up, started a fire, and prepared breakfast. I boiled tea, made *rtsam pa*, and served my parents-in-law, husband, and children. When my daughters got older, they helped me milk the yaks after breakfast. I did all the chores when they were younger. Managing all the household tasks was challenging - collecting yak dung, herding calves, churning milk, and fetching water alone.

After collecting dung, my daughters and I picked up the half-dried dung we had spread on the ground a few days earlier and left to dry. I then prepared lunch that was typically *nyog* 'sticky-textured porridge', boiled tea, *rtsam pa*, or *sha thum*' dumplings', and served my family members. I churned milk and boiled buttermilk to make cheese after lunch. Afterward, I dried the cheese in a cloth filter outside the tent. Next, I gathered the yak dung I had taken out in the morning, spread it to dry, and added it to a dung pile. Afterward, I returned home and tanned sheep and lamb skins. It was afternoon by the time I finished all these tasks.

Next, I told my daughters to drive the calves home and tether them, boiled a pot of tea for my parents-in-law and children, and

waited for our herder to return. I offered my husband tea, *rtsam pa*, and bread when he brought the milk yaks home. I then tethered the milk yaks and began milking with my daughters. Sometimes, it was dark when we finished. I subsequently prepared dinner. I cooked meat and noodles or made *sha thum* and served it. After dinner, I prepared beds for my parents-in-law and children before I finally went to bed.

Every fifteen days, I put all the butter I had churned in a sheepskin bag, leaving some for my family. I sewed the opening shut, shaped some of the remaining butter into small balls, and shared it with neighbor children. Sometimes, I made several bags of butter. Local women complimented me on this; I was proud of myself.

Autumn and winter had different daily routines compared to summer. We only milked the yaks in winter mornings, and I made clothes for my children and parents-in-law during Lo sar 'Tibetan New Year'.

The sense of community also changes as time passes. Father is friendly, passionate about helping others, and has many friends from different places and of various ethnicities, such as Hui and Han, which also explains his fluency in the Qinghai Chinese dialect.[1] In one of Father's relatives' families, an old man is the head of the family. Father helps this family shear their sheep every year. In 2022, he took my brother-in-law with him to help.

A few years ago, one of his Han friends was seriously ill with high blood pressure and asked Father to come and help shear his family's sheep, which he willingly did.

Today, very few people help each other during communal work, such as sheep shearing. People believe they have advanced technology devices and money; they don't have to rely on each other like they did in the past.

---

[1] Various Mtsho sngon Chinese dialects are spoken in Zi ling (Xining) Municipality and the counties of Datong Hui and Tu, Huangyuan, Huangzhong, Ping'an, Guide, Menyuan, Ledu, Minhe Hui and Tu, Huzhu Mongghul (Tu), Hualong Hui, Xunhua Salar, and Tongren (Dede 2009) among others. The Mtsho sngon Chinese dialects have considerable variations, e.g., Zhu et al. (1997) describe a strongly Altaicized Mtsho sngon Chinese dialect.

Additionally, place names hold significance in my home area, even if their meanings may be unknown or sound unfamiliar. For example, Ha lung Ravine now belongs to one of my relatives. We are unsure of its meaning. Local elders say Mongolians once inhabited this area for an extended period, which may account for such names.[2]

Other place names are clearer. For example, my family camps in Me thog lung pa, 'Ravine of Flowers', during the summer. According to Father (Tshe brtan rgyal, b. 1970), our summer pasture had plentiful grass when he was a child, and Me thog lung pa had many *me tog ser chen* (*Trollius hondoensis*), explaining the name.

Dung dkar can 'Conch Mountain' is in our autumn pasture. This name originated from local elders who observed that the mountain was conch-shaped. Another mountain in the area is Drel mo'i lung pa 'Brown Bear Mountain'. According to local elders, a woman from the community was spinning thread while herding on that mountain long ago. A brown bear approached her, and despite warnings and calls from other herders, she was so engrossed in spinning that she was unaware of their warnings. Tragically, the bear attacked her, and she died. The mountain became known as Brown Bear Mountain due to this incident.

Before moving to the autumn pasture, the locals used to drive their animals to Mtsho sngon po every year. Elders believed that salt water protected livestock from diseases such as diarrhea, worms, and hoof diseases, and was beneficial for the rest of the year.

According to local elders, the more *'brug gi chu 'thung ba* 'waterspouts'[3] 'dragon drinking water', the more rainfall there will be in autumn.

These place names reflect the history, experiences, and cultural significance of different locations in our region, even if

---

[2] "Ha lung" in Tibetan may come from Mongol haluun [xalu:ŋ] 'hot'. (In Mongghul <halong>). However, locals are unable to relate 'hot' with this ravine.

[3] For examples, see https://youtu.be/TvibenKNAII?t=58 23 May 2023.

their precise meanings and origins are not fully understood.

What does home mean to you? *Rang yul gad pa yin rung skyid* 'Although home is a cliff corner, it is still the best' is a common local saying. I never asked my parents which home they liked best because we moved four times a year and had four homes. Each home or pasture has its own characteristics. My parents often say where the livestock are is where they have a sense of warmth and belonging, giving that place a sense of home. When my siblings and I were children, we often asked each other which pastures we liked best. We each had reasons based on landscapes, transportation convenience, neighbors we liked most, and distance from the Township Town.

The second part of this book focuses on Brother's childhood experiences with herding and education and his journey of learning to dance, being a dancer, and being a dance teacher. Locally, dancers are looked at with skepticism. It is believed that dancers will not have a good future. Plus, there is the idea that dancers are generally disobedient and inclined to engage in social misbehavior.

Brother became very interested in dance when our family got a TV in 2010. He enjoyed watching dancing and singing programs that bored other family members, especially Father and me. He started herding yaks at the age of seven and had many experiences, both sad and joyful while doing so.

He started attending school with encouragement from a cousin, without telling family members. One of his memorable stories about middle school involved a head teacher. Before summer vacation, he and his classmates were delighted when they heard this teacher would not be teaching them the next semester. Brother and some of his classmates misbehaved when the teacher told them to do something before they left for home. They hit the teacher and fled while he was organizing the students in a queue as they left the school. When the next semester began, this strict teacher was again in their classroom, frightening and embarrassing them.

Part Three concerns my home community members' ornaments, especially women's. I address how and where the ornaments originated and what family members do with them

when they become older. I also describe changes in local women's aesthetic standards for ornaments. For instance, when I showed Grandmother a picture of myself wearing a *dmar gdan*,[4] she commented that I did not have my hair in small braids and added that a woman never wore a *dmar gdan* without small braids. When Grandmother was young, most local women wore *dmar gdan* with small braids.

Local women today wear fewer hair ornaments, and some dye and curl their hair. Today, most women avoid wearing heavy adornments that women wore in the past. The light and smaller ornaments women now wear are commonly first seen on social media. Young local women deem them the most attractive today.

My family refers to a local metalsmith as "My family's metalsmith" because he came to my family in the late 1980s. My paternal grandfather gave him a room, and he stayed and made silver ornaments for a living. He stayed with my family for many years, made most of Mother's *glo gzar*,[5] and made many ornaments for several of my family's relatives.

In 2022, Sister and Mother asked this metalsmith to remake their old *glo gzar* in a new style. After receiving pictures of the new style *glo gzar* through WeChat from my sister, I attempted to convince my mother not to follow the trend, but my efforts were futile. I soon received photos of Mother's altered *glo gzar* via WeChat. I was relieved to learn that one of Mother's old-style *glo gzar* had not been altered.

In conclusion, the decision to sell many of our yaks in 2022 was difficult but necessary for our survival. With less grass in our home area, we had to find new ways to sustain ourselves. The sale of yaks is a financial transaction, and it symbolizes my rapidly changing community and the challenges we face in adapting to new ways of life, partly in response to government policy, including strict regulations on how many animals a family can

[4] A decoration that has three red and black cloth strips on which twenty or so silver bowls are attached to the bride's back as decorations and may extend from the neck to the feet.
[5] See Table 3 for a photo and description.

herd and where they can be grazed. While this policy is essential to preserving the local fragile ecosystem, it also restricts our ability to maintain our traditional way of life.

Despite these challenges, my family and others in our community remain hopeful as we explore ways to adapt to the changing landscape, diversify our income streams by operating small shops, selling sheepskin robes, and embrace sustainable herding practices such as building shelters to raise animals at home.

PART ONE

AN A MDO PASTORAL TIBETAN FAMILY'S CHANGING DAILY LIVES

LOCATION

FIG 1. Rgyab lung Community, Mtsho sngon (Qinghai) Province.[6]

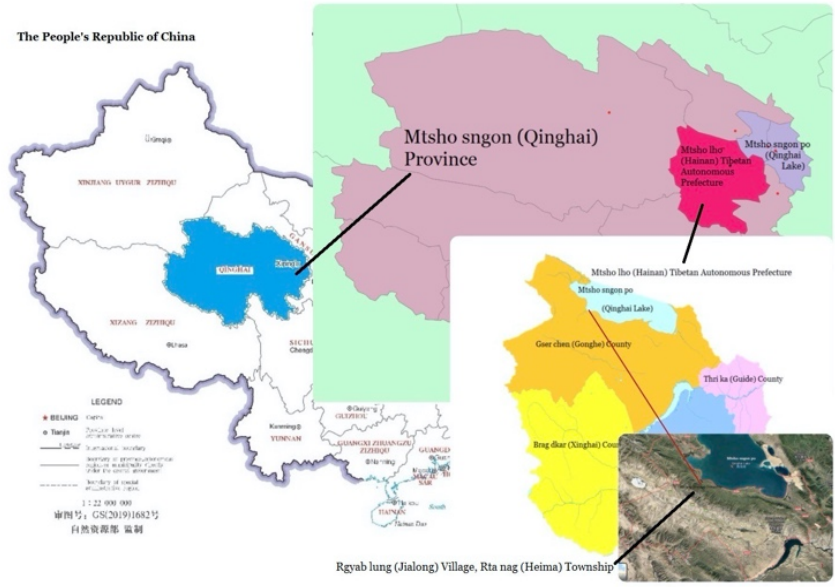
The People's Republic of China
Mtsho sngon (Qinghai) Province
Mtsho lho (Hainan) Tibetan Autonomous Prefecture
Mtsho sngon po (Qinghai Lake)
Gser chen (Gonghe) County
Thi ka (Guide) County
Rgyab lung (Jialong) Village, Rta nag (Heima) Township

FIG 2. Family pastures.[7]

[6] From Sgrol ma yag (2021:4).
[7] An edited version of https://rb.gy/cyrub (3 October 2022).

Table 1. People.

Name	Short Form	Dates	Relationship
'Brug lha rgyal	'Bbrug kho	b. 1993	brother
'Jam dbyangs don 'grub	'Ja' kho	b. 1984	maternal uncle
'Phag mo rdo rje	'Phags log	b. 2007	nephew
'Phag mo rdo rje	'Phag log	b.2007	nephew
A rdo	A ma a rdo	b. 1942	Grandmother's sister
Bkra shis'bum	Bkra kho	b.1973	paternal cousin
Blo ldan	Blo ldan	1928-2008	paternal grandfather
Bo mo thar		?	maternal great-grandfather
Bstan pa tshe ring	Bstan kho	b. 1974	maternal uncle
Dgon pa rgyal	Dgon pa	b. 1955	Grandmother's brother
Dgra 'dul thar			
Dpal 'dzin	Dpal 'dzin	b. 1959	Grandmother's brother
Dpa' tho	Dpa' tho	b. 1948	Grandmother's brother
G.yu mtsho rgyal		b.~1955	paternal relative
Gnam skyid yag	Na kho	b. 1944	maternal grandmother
Gsgrol ma mtsho	Sgro sgro	b. 1972	mother

Gu bde skyid	Gu bde	b. 1968	paternal relative
Kho b+he'	A ma kho b+he'	b. 1951	Grandmother's sister
Khon skyabs thar	Kho b+he	b. 1978	maternal uncle
Klu 'bum rgyal	A bu la	b. 1978	paternal cousin
Klu mo tshe ring	Klu mo	b. 1987	Sister
Klu mtsho skyid	Klu kho	b. 1978	paternal aunt
Kun mtsho yag	Kun mtsho	b. ~1936	paternal relative
Lha skyid yag	A je	b. 1955	paternal aunt
Mkha' mo yag	Mkha' mo	b. 1985	maternal aunt
Mtsho mo	Mtsho mo	b. 1965	maternal aunt
Pad ma rgya mtsho		?	a Tibetan dancer
Pad ma rgyal		?	a friend of 'Brug lha rgyal
Pad ma tshe ring	Ba b+he	b. 1975	maternal uncle
Ra ba dpal mkhar		?	the head of Theb rgya (Tiebuja) Monastery
Rdo kho	Rdo kho	1941-2006	maternal grandfather
Rdo rje tshe brtan		b. ~1950-2001	paternal relative
Rgya kho	Rgya kho	b. 1964	maternal uncle
Rgyal mtshan	Rnam phyug	b. 1972	maternal uncle
Rgyal mtshan	A khu rgyal		paternal relative

	mtshan		
Sgrol ma yag	Rgro rus	b. 1995	self
Sgron mtsho	A ma sgron mtsho	b. 1940	Grandmother's sister
Snying dkar rgyal		?	maternal great-grandfather
Snying rtse rgyal	Snying rtse	b. 1988	paternal cousin
Tshe b+ha		?	a friend of 'Brug lha rgyal
Tshe brtan rgyal	Tshe le	b. 1970	father
Tshe gzungs	Tshe gzungs	b. 1966	paternal aunt
Tshe ring lhun 'grub	Lhu kho	b. 1982	brother-in-law
Tshe ring rdo rje		?	a friend of 'Brug lha rgyal
Tshe ring rnam lha	Tshe kho	b. 1999	paternal cousin

Table 2. Place names.

Name	Location
Beijing	the capital city of China
Brag mchog	a community in Rta nag ma Township
Bum pa	a community in Rta nag ma Township
Chab cha	a township in Gonghe County
Chengdu	the capital city of Sichuan Province
Chu lam	a ravine of the Rgyab lung Community
D+hiH tsha	a monastery in Dpa' lung County
Datong	Datong Hui and Tu Autonomous

	County
Dpa' lung	Dpa' lung County
Gangcha	Rkang tsha County
Kan su'u (Gansu)	Kan su'u Province
Gser chen (Gonghe)	Gser chen County
Kar la (Garila)	a community in Sprel nag Township
Go 'dabs	the foot of a rocky mountain
Gor mo (Ge'er mu)	Gor mo (Ge'ermu, Golmud) City
Khri ka (Guide)	Khri ka County
Mtsho lho (Hainan)	Mtsho lho Tibetan Autonomous Prefecture
Mtsho shar (Haidong)	Mtsho shar City
Stong skor (Huangyuan)	Stong skor County
Sku 'bum (Huangzhong)	Sku 'bum County
Hor grong (Huzhu)	Hor grong Tu Autonomous County
Rgyab lung (Jialong)	a community in Rta nag ma Township
Gcan tsha (Jianzha)	Gcan tsha County
Jo skor dgon	a monastery in Rta nag ma Township
Lung mdo (Ledu)	Lung mdo County
Rgya mdo (Menyuan)	Rgya mdo Hui Autonomous County
fang da juyuan	Mei Lanfang Grand Theater
Mzhong thang (Minhe)	gzhong thang Hui and Tu Autonomous County
Mtsho sngon po (Qinghai Lake)	Mtsho sngon po in mtsho sngon Province
Mtsho sngon	Mtsho sngon Province
Nor bu g.yu rgyal	a mountain in Rgyab lung Community
Nyin 'breng	a mountain area in Rgyab lung Community
Ra 'khyog	a community in Rta nag ma

	Township
Rta nag ma	Rta nag ma Township
Reb gong	Reb gong County
Shanghai	Shanghai City
Shenzhen	Shenzhen City
Sprel nag (Shinaihai)	a township in Gonghe County
Zi khron (Sichuan)	Zi khron Province
Taiwan	Taiwan Province
Xi'an	the capital city of Shaanxi Province
Theb rgya	a community in Sprel nag Township
Theg chen chos 'khor Gling	a monastery in Shinaihai Township
Ya rdzi (Xunhua)	Xunhua Salar (Sala) Autonomous County
Zi ling (Xining)	the capital of Mtsho sngon Province

Table 3. Colloquial terms.

Wylie	Tibetan
bag ldu rgya ling	བཐ་སྡུ་རྒྱ་ལིང་།
g.yag rgan dkar ldang	གཡག་རྒན་དཀར་ལྡང་།
gwa ldang ma	གྭ་ལྡང་མ།
hu tse	ཧུ་ཙེ།
kham gzhis ma	ཁམ་གཞིས་མ།
khya gzhis ma	ཁྱ་གཞིས་མ།
mgon rgan	མགོན་རྒན།
mtshe ge ma	མཚེ་གེ་མ།
nyin 'breng	ཉིན་འབྲེང་།
rgya brgyang ma	རྒྱ་བརྒྱང་མ།
rgya rus	རྒྱ་རུས།
rgya tho ma	རྒྱ་ཐོ་མ།
rgye'u nag ldang	རྒྱུག་ནག་ལྡང་།
rkyang ldang	རྐྱང་ལྡང་།
rkyang ldang ma	རྐྱང་ལྡང་མ།

rnga rgan	ངའ་རྒན།
rta rgan nag ldang	རྟ་རྒན་ནག་ལྡང་།
smug tho ma	སྨུག་ཐོ་མ།
sngo ldu ma	སྔོ་ལྡུ་མ།
sre tho	སྲེ་ཐོ།
sre tho ma	སྲེ་ཐོ་མ།
srung rtags ma	སྲུང་རྟགས་མ།

FAMILY

I describe my Tibetan herding family's daily life in Rgyab lung (Jialong) Community, Rta nag ma (Heimahe) Township Town, Gser chen (Gonghe) County, [8] Mtsho lho (Hainan) Tibetan Autonomous Prefecture, Mtsho sngon (Qinghai) Province, PR China. I focus on herding, seasonal movement, house/tent chores, foraging, assisting neighbors, treating livestock, grazing, and religious rituals in 2015-2022.

I begin by introducing my family:

My maternal grandmother (Gnam skyid yag, b. 1944) belonged to the Jo skor Tribe and married my grandfather (Rdo kho, b. 1941-2006) from the Bdud shul kha ra Tribe when she was seventeen. Their parents and elders arranged their marriage. Before marriage, Grandmother spent most of her time herding. When she was around eight, her family hired a fifteen-year-old boy from the

[8] In 2021, Gser chen County included seven towns, four townships, ninety-nine administrative communities, and a total population of 133,409. The county had twenty-two ethnic groups (seventy percent of the total population) including Tibetans, Han (34,364), Hui (8,844), and Mongolian (2,140). The county had 18,761,600 *mu* of usable grassland, 457,600 *mu* of arable land, and an average altitude of 3,200 meters (https://bit.ly/3Gw2RfS 20 November 2022). Heimahe's (Township Town) population was 4,000 with Tibetans accounting for ninety percent of the total. The township town is 1,000 square kilometers in area and includes Rgyab lung (Jialong), Brag mchog (Zhihequ), Bum pa (Wenba), and Ra 'khyog (Ranhuqu). The 2011 population of Mtsho lho Prefecture was 437,800, including 269,100 Tibetans (sixty-three percent) https://bit.ly/2OAGwll 25 July 2020.

same tribe and gave him some livestock as compensation. She often herded in the mountains with him. Grandmother had few worries because her family elders managed everything.

The drowning of all their sheep in Mtsho sngon po 'Qinghai Lake'[9] was a significant disaster her family experienced during that time. Grandmother vividly recounted the events surrounding this tragedy:

It snowed heavily for several days, and the snow was very thick. Father and Grandfather worked throughout the night, protecting the sheep from predators and preventing them from running away. At dawn, they rested while the blizzard continued unabated. Suddenly, the mother noticed the sheep were running away and tried unsuccessfully to stop them. She called my father and grandfather, but the faster they ran after the flock, the faster the sheep seemed to move.

They realized the sheep were heading towards the lake. The snow had covered the entire landscape, making it difficult for the sheep to recognize boundaries and danger. Eventually, Father and Grandfather caught up with the flock and attempted to stop them with Father holding one end of a rope and Grandfather holding the other end. They pulled together to halt the flock's progress. It was too late. The lake ice broke into pieces, and they found themselves standing on a large chunk of broken ice along with the sheep. With heart-wrenching bleats, the flock plunged into the lake while some sheep still on land were so terrified they jumped into the water.

Mother, Father, and Grandfather could only watch helplessly as their beloved animals perished. They managed to escape from the broken ice and returned home with heavy hearts. I can never forget the sorrowful expression on Grandfather's face that morning. I was responsible for pouring water on his hands as he washed his face in the morning. He often gazed at the now empty spot where we had kept the sheep and sighed sorrowfully. He constantly worried that our family would suffer from hunger. From that day onward, our survival

[9] Central Asia's largest mountain lake (3,200 meters above sea level) without a river outlet is in a depression of the Mdo la Mountains.

depended on our yaks.

FIG 3. Gnam skyid yag (b. 1944, 2019).

FIG 4. Tshe brtan rgyal (b.1968, ~2013). During the 2013 Lo sar, my father wore my brother's new robe and a *me cha* 'tool for making a fire' in our adobe house in the winter pasture. I admired Brother's new stylish robe and ornaments my parents had purchased in the county town for the festival. The Bskal ba yar 'gro brand was popular among herders in our home area at that time. It specialized in new-style Tibetan robes and shirts using various fabrics. Each of their garments featured a small silver badge engraved with the brand name, which locals believed made the robes and shirts more unique. Brother wanted to capture the moment with his phone camera, so Father borrowed and wore the new robe for the pictures.

I rarely saw my parents buying new robes and ornaments for themselves during Lo sar. Instead, they bought new items for their children. It was expensive to buy new items for every family member. However, they were always fair regarding their children and made sure to buy something new for each of us during Lo sar. For instance, if Brother and Sister got new robes that Grandfather made or changed the cloth cover, they bought me a pair of new shoes or made a new sheepskin hat.

FIG 5. Sgrol ma mtsho (b. 1965, 2017). On the fifteenth day of the first month, my parents and I embarked on a pilgrimage to Bya khyung Monastery,[10] accompanied by one of my maternal uncle's family members. I took a picture on the circumambulation route of my mother wearing one of my sheepskin robes made by my paternal grandfather. The robe was too short for me, but it suited Mother.

We had set off from our family's winter pasture at two AM with my uncle driving since he had a driver's license and was locally considered a skilled driver. It was Father's and my first pilgrimage to Bya khyung. Mother had made the pilgrimage before she married, accompanied by her siblings, parents, and other locals. They had visited her brother and cousin, who were residing at the monastery then.

The heavy snowfall caused us to get lost. Some roads Uncle was familiar with were closed due to the snow, forcing us onto unfamiliar routes. At one point, we found ourselves alone in the middle of a road covered with thickening snow with no one else in sight. It took a long time to progress. As we continued, the snow grew thicker, and my parents and Uncle expressed uncertainty about whether we were on the correct route. With nobody around to ask for directions, the thought of turning back seemed the best option. Uncle playfully teased Father, jokingly suggesting he had chosen *chos bgegs* 'obstacles in religious rituals'.

Finally, Uncle stopped a truck and inquired if we were on the right road to Bya khyung Monastery. The driver said we were and cautioned us about the thick snow. Nevertheless, my parents and Uncle decided to press on. After several more hours, we arrived at a small town. We had a meal there and asked locals for further directions to the monastery.

Our journey continued uphill along a steep mountain with a narrow zigzagging road. Looking outside the car while it was

[10] Bya khyung Monastery is commonly known as Brag bya khyung or Bya khyung dgon pa. Its full name is Theg chen yon tan dar rgyas gling. It is located 34.5 kilometers west of the county seat of Dpa' lung Hui Autonomous County and 9.5 kilometers south of today's Tsha phug bod rug Township on Bya khyung Mountain (, 26 June 2023.)

moving was scary. The slightest slip might have caused the car to roll down the mountain. However, local residents diligently swept snow and scattered soil on the road to prevent cars from slipping. Eventually, we reached the mountaintop where Bya khyung Monastery stood, joining the gathering of many local people who had also made the pilgrimage.

FIG 6. Klu mo tshe ring (b. 1988, unidentified photographer, ~2008). It was the fifteenth day of the fifth month. My sister was eighteen and had eloped the day before. I was attending boarding school at that time. One day student classmate had access to news from our community. In the morning before we headed to a *lab tshe* near Mtsho sngon po, where an annual local festival was held, my classmate shared some information with me:

"I'll tell you something."

"What?" I asked.

"It's about your sister."

"What happened?" I inquired anxiously.

"Maybe you'll find out later today when you meet your family," he teased.

Suddenly, I felt a painful prick, as if sensing something bad had happened to Sister. I looked at my giggling classmate's face. I begged him to tell me what had happened.

He finally said, "Your sister has been taken to her boyfriend's home. His family was celebrating with many people at their home this morning."

After our performance at the festival, I spotted my parents, rushed to them, changed out of my performance costume, and put on my robe. We then went to a small tent shop to buy some beverages. Mother's eyes were swollen. She said Sister had indeed eloped, when I asked her what had happened, Later, I found Sister with her friends. She wore her *phrug* 'thin woolen-fabric robe' and Mother's ornaments, her coral necklace, silver earrings, and a wool hat adorned with colorful plastic flowers. Blue and white *kha btags* hung from her hair braids, signaling she was engaged, and she also wore her *tsheg bstar* 'panels worn by women above their waists when they have braided hair'. Sister was beautiful and took a picture with her friends in a local photo studio.

FIG 7. Tshe ring lhun 'grub (b. 1983), and 'Phag mo rdo rje (b. 2008, 2017). During Lo sar, Brother, my cousins, and I visited Sister and Brother-in-law's family in the spring pasture. Afterward, Brother-in-law and his son (my nephew) joined us as we returned to our home in the winter pasture. Brother-in-law is skilled at sewing and often makes robes and hats for his family members. He made the robe he wears in the picture.

'Phag mo rdo rje wears a sheepskin robe my father (his maternal grandfather) bought in the county town, along with a *me cha* and *mda' ra* 'bullet belt'. He was thrilled to wear them.

During Lo sar, we children enjoyed visiting Brother-in-law's family after a quick visit to the elders of our own family, such as my aunt, grandmother, and other relatives who lived nearby. We loved visiting his family because Lo sar was a time when young men could freely smoke and drink alcohol, which was inconvenient in the presence of parents and elders. At times, it felt like a bar at Brother-in-law's home, with young men drinking, smoking, talking, and laughing loudly throughout the night.

When my male cousins visited my family, my parents offered them beer, but they politely declined, with excuses. "No, thank you, Uncle Tshe le. I must drive," or "I'm not drinking," to maintain a good impression.

However, during Lo sar, none of the men refused alcohol or smoking at Brother-in-law's home. Even those who had dyed their hair blond, removed their hats and enjoyed the carefree atmosphere. Young women offered to help Sister with house chores, but she refused, insisting we enjoy ourselves by drinking and eating whatever we liked, wanting us to relax, watch TV, and use our phones without worry.

When we purchased items for the festival before Lo sar, Brother-in-law bought a lot of alcohol and cigarettes, knowing young cousins and men would come to drink and smoke. If Brother-in-law's family was celebrating Lo sar in the spring pasture, Brother and my cousins would plan ahead, deciding how many days they would spend there and the dates, among other details.

FIG 8. 'Brug lha rgyal (b. 1989, 2020). 'Brug lha rgyal wears his sheepskin robe, which Father bought in 2008 in the County Town. He was very happy when Father brought it home. He couldn't wait to try it on and was eager to see how it looked. However, it was too big for him. My parents suggested that he save it for the following year, but he insisted on wearing it during that year's Losar festivities.

Uncles and aunts complimented him and said he looked handsome in his new sheepskin robe, which brought him more joy. When we were children, wearing new clothes during Lo sar was the happiest moment of our lives. Times and people change. Today, Brother and Sister pay little attention to whether a robe is new. If it is clean and not tattered, they are content. I still enjoy wearing new robes and Mother's ornaments during Lo sar.

FIG 9. Sgrol ma yag (b. 1995, Khon skyabs thar, ~2007). One day, I visited my grandmother after school wearing a robe made of Kazakh wool fabric, which Mother had bought in the Township Town. The robe had imitation otter skin on the edges. Mother made the clothes I wore using cloth purchased in the County Town. During this time, Mother became ill, so we went to the County Town and stayed in the hospital. While there, my parents bought different colored cloth before we returned home. The green cloth I wore was a piece from one of the fabrics we had purchased.

My parents bought the red hat in the Township Town and specially prepared these clothes for Children's Day. I completed the outfit with my favorite shoes: imitation leather shoes Father bought, which reminded me of a pair of shoes I had when I was eight or nine. I walked with Brother, Sister, neighbor kids, and cousins during Lo Sar to visit relatives' families from morning till evening. On our way to one home in the afternoon, my shoes began falling apart from the upper part to the sole. They deteriorated even faster as we walked until I could hardly continue walking. Sister, Brother, and the other kids looked for a rope or cloth to wrap my shoes and found some shabby cloth. They tore strips from the better part to wrap around my torn shoes. I felt embarrassed and worried, thinking wearing torn shoes during Lo sar was shameful. I admired others who had nice, good-quality shoes I worried I wouldn't make it home that day.

While visiting Grandmother's home, one of my maternal uncles had a camera. We were excited about taking pictures. Mother and Uncle's wife dressed up in robes and ornaments in preparation for the photos. I wanted to wear Mother's ornaments that day, but I finally wore Aunt's coral necklace, which was better than Mother's. Grandmother and the elders explained that children shouldn't wear ornaments like adults and should act their age. We took many pictures that day, but I only received the one below from Uncle.

My maternal grandmother, Gnam skyid yag , had six siblings: Dgon pa rgyal, b. 1955), Dpa 'dzin (b. 1959), Dpa' tho (b. 1948), Sgron mtsho (b. 1940), Kho b+he' (b. 1951), and A rdo (b. 1942); seven sons; and three daughters. She lived with her youngest son, but her children asked her to stay with whomever she wanted, so she often had extended stays with my mother and Mother's younger sister. Her other children lived near each other.

My father, Tshe brtan rgyal, had three sisters (Lha skyid yag, b. 1955; Klu mtsho skyid, b. 1978; and Tshe gzungs, b. 1966) and no brothers. He learned to read Tibetan from his father (Blo ldan, 1928-2008) and through self-study. He never attended school.

My mother, Sgrol ma mtsho, had two sisters. Mtsho mo (b. 1965) and Mkha' mo yag (b. 1985), and six brothers: 'Jam dbyangs don 'grub (b. 1984), Khon skyabs thar (b. 1978), Pad ma tshe ring (b. 1975), Bstan pa tshe ring (b. 1974), Rgyal mtshan (b. 1972), and Rgya kho (b. 1964). She married my father when she was seventeen and moved to his home. My parents did not know each other before their marriage, as family elders had arranged it.

Mother didn't remember the specific dates of her children's births but did recall the season of their births.

Klu mo was my paternal grandfather's favorite granddaughter. When someone gave Grandfather delicious food, he kept it and first shared it with Klu mo. Before marriage, she and Grandfather herded yaks in our spring pasture, where we also rented grassland for our yaks. Klu mo took care of Grandfather. In 2006 she married and now lives in her own home with Tshe ring lhun 'grub, and their son.

'Brug lha rgyal was born in our spring pasture. When he was six, he secretly went to school with one of our cousins. After a while, Grandfather negotiated with the school principal, who gave 'Brug kho permission to attend.[11] Later, he studied dance at

[11] I referred to a local male elder at least fifty years my senior and who I knew well as A pa, for example, A pa rdo rje. If I did not know him very well, I would say A pa rdo rje dpal ldan, using his full name. For local males who are ten to thirty years my senior, I said, similarly, A khu rdo rje or Aku rdo rje dpal ldan. However, for a male who was a relative, *a*

Northwest Minzu University in Lanzhou City and performed as a dancer. In 2022, he taught dancing in Chengdu City, Sichuan Province.[12]

In 1995, my paternal cousin, Gu bde skyid, helped Mother give birth to me in our adobe house in the winter pasture. Mother once told me that Gu bde skyid was my mother. When I asked for an explanation, she said, "She helped me give birth to you. When you were very little, you called her A ma 'Mother'." Gu bde skyid eventually became a nun and went to live with her mother, Kun mtsho yag (b. 1936), in 2020.

My Tibetan herding family lived in Rgyab lung (Jialong) Community, Rta nag ma (Heimahe) Township Town, Gser chen (Gonghe) County, Mtsho lho (Hainan) Tibetan Autonomous Prefecture, Mtsho sngon Province, China in 2022. We had the following pastures: summer (May, June, July), winter (October - March), autumn (August, September), and spring (March, April). The winter and spring pastures were divided among individual families in 1995 and 1997. The summer and autumn pastures were collectively shared among about one hundred families.[13]

Autumn 2021 was the first time we stayed in the spring pasture during autumn because there was more grass there. My parents said deer would come from the mountains at night to graze if we left. After people left the spring pasture for the autumn pasture, there were no livestock and very few people, so deer came to graze. My parents thought it was best to let the yaks finish the grass.

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pa was placed before his name if he was at least ten years my senior. For a younger male relative, I used his full name without *a pa* or *a khu*. *A khu* was placed before a monk's name regardless of age. I referred to a local female elder at least fifty years my senior and who I knew well as, for example, A ma gnam mtsho. If I did not know her well, I said A ma gnam mtsho yag, using her full name. For local females who were ten to thirty years my senior, I said A je gnam mtsho or A je gnam mtsho yag. If she was a nun, I said A ne jo mo 'nun' or the short form "A ne."

[12] See Sgrol ma yag's (2020) biography of 'Brug lha rgyal.

[13] My paternal tribe is Sga ri. My mother is from the Jo skor Tribe. Neighboring tribes include Rong po, Kha rgya, and Zhor gtsang.

A second reason for staying was that our autumn pasture had less grass and water than in previous years because of minimal precipitation in 2021. We also had to pay families with no or few livestock because the spring pasture was shared collectively. We did not have to pay if we stayed in the spring pasture. The payment was based on the number of livestock a family had and was required only for families who grazed their animals in the autumn pasture. My parents thought it was not worth the expense, so they stayed in the spring pasture.

I thought my routinely predictable child would never change. I disliked herding yak calves and yaks and collecting yak dung. It was boring and grueling, especially in the summer pasture. The most challenging time for our home community was when we were about to move from summer to autumn pasture. There was little grass. The livestock, especially the yaks, were in a frenzy, going here and there, eagerly searching for fresh grass. Moreover, the weather was unpredictable in early autumn, with a combination of wind, rain, snow, and fog almost every day for around ten days. After this weather uncertainty, we moved to the autumn pasture.

Father mostly herded sheep, Sister and Brother herded older yaks, and I herded yak calves. Mother did the home chores. In 2008, my family stopped herding sheep because my older sister married and moved to her husband's home, and Brother and I were in school. My parents couldn't herd both sheep and yaks by themselves. Their daily life changed. Winter, for instance, had been the busiest and hardest time when we herded sheep because it was birthing time. Without sheep, it was no longer such a busy time.

Before 2015, Father or Brother herded yaks in summer while Mother and I busily collected yak dung, churned milk, fetched water, milked, cooked, washed clothes, and so forth. In 2015, my family stopped moving to the summer pasture. One reason was Mother had surgery for a disc protrusion, and living in tents in moist conditions on the summer pasture was not good for her. We drove our yaks to the summer pasture, left them, and checked on them every several days.

Summer was the busiest time for women. Once, when my family was in the summer pasture, it rained for many days. When we were nearly out of dry fuel, Mother, my maternal aunt, and I walked for about an hour to the mountains to collect *glang ma* (*Salix cupularis*), which we tied together and carried home on our backs. My talkative mother and Aunt chatted and laughed on the way home, so we didn't tire. Dom phrug, our dog, also followed us that day.

We also helped neighbors and spent time together when we were less busy, in addition to herding and interacting with livestock.

HOUSING

We lived in brick or adobe houses in the winter and spring pastures. In the summer and autumn pastures, we lived in tents.

In about 2015, my family stopped moving to our summer pasture because Father decided the yaks and their calves should stay in the mountains for the summer without being milked, and the yaks did not need to be driven home every day. Another reason was Mother's disc protrusion surgery. Father, Klu mo, and A pha lhu kho checked on the yaks every seven to ten days to ensure they were in the mountains. 'Brug kho and I periodically checked on the yaks when we were at home.

We lived in a white canvas tent on our autumn pasture until 2021, when Father paid three Chinese men 3,500 RMB for materials plus labor to build a one-room color-coated light steel panel building. This was a big change from my childhood when there were only two or three adobe houses, which the tent dwellers admired.

In 2019-2022, local families, including my family, increasingly financed steel panel buildings. Unlike tents, they provided better shelter from wind and rain and did not require packing and moving. Most recently, we took food and little else when we moved to our autumn pasture because we had a stove, cooking utensils, and beds in the pastures we were moving to.

My paternal grandfather planned the two-room brick

house in our spring pasture and arranged for his Chinese friends from farming areas to build it. One room was a shrine where wooden boxes containing clothes, food, and other items were stored. The other room was where we ate, cooked, and slept. This house cost about 30,000 RMB to construct.

We had a four-room adobe house in the winter pasture, including a living room where we cooked, ate, slept, and entertained guests. This room featured an adobe *hu ze* 'sleeping eating platform'. Near a window, the *hu ze* was about five by three meters. A second room was for storing wooden boxes, kitchen supplies, and so on. Meat was stored in a third room, and the fourth room was for my paternal grandfather. 'Brug kho slept there in 2021 when he was home. This was my family's favorite house. It was warm in cold days and cool in hot days. We annually celebrated Lo sar in this house.

FIG 10. Winter pasture adobe and red brick house (2019).

FIG 11. My family's tent in the autumn pasture (~2018).

FIG 12. My family's tile-roofed brick house in the spring pasture 2019.

FIG 13. Klu mo's family's tent in the summer pasture. In the early 2020s, tents with designs were popular in my home community. The structure/shape of the tent my family used was the same, although my family's former tent lacked these designs (2020).

In 2021, we had 200 yaks and three horses. Klu mo cared for about thirty of our sheep. Until 2020, one of Father's cousins cared for our sheep. However, my parents came to feel it was inappropriate for his family to care for the sheep, so Klu mo and A pha lhu kho said they would care for them.

My family herded sheep until the summer of 2008, when Father divided our sheep into four flocks. Klu mo married in 2006 and moved to her husband's home, as mentioned above. Later, Grandfather became ill and passed away. 'Brug kho and I were in school. My parents could not herd all the sheep and yaks by themselves, explaining why the sheep were divided. Three flocks were for the families caring for them for three years and we had one flock. During this time, each family was entitled to receive half of the lambs produced by their flocks each year as compensation for caring for the sheep. After three years, Father sold all the sheep.

Our beloved watchdog, Dom phrug, 'Bear Cub', died in 2020. I don't know why we called him Dom phrug. He was a *rgya rgya myig bzi* 'dog with four eyes', meaning a dog with a brown spot above each eye. Such dogs protected a family from wolves, thieves, and evils. In 2022, we had no watchdog because my parents decided it was impossible to find a dog as loyal and able as Dom phrug, so it was best to have no dog.

We also had Zhi la ser ril 'Yellow Cat' that we often called Mi lo 'Cat'. My parents were fond of him because he was a good mouser.

LIFE

MORNING

Around six AM, Mother got up and checked to see if our yaks and horses were in the livestock enclosures and could all stand. If there were problems, she returned, woke Father, and consulted him. If there were no problems, she used a scoop to remove ash from the stove and put it in the ash container. She then made a small mound of dry yak dung in the stove, took one or two pieces of plastic cut from bottles, lit the plastic with a match or lighter, and placed the burning plastic in a small depression atop the mound of yak dung. Making a fire in winter was easier because Mother and I set dry grass on fire in the stove and placed dry yak dung on top of it. Mother then filled a green square garbage container the local government gave each family in about 2014 with dry yak dung. Mother discarded ash she took from the stove on the *thal spungs* 'ash heap' at the back of the female yak enclosure. Throwing ash on paths and when people were near our homes was taboo. It was inauspicious to see people discarding ash. Mother then returned, put a kettle of water on the stove, and went to the Rta nag River, which took around ten minutes. Mother chanted *Skyabs 'gro 'Tara'* scriptures as she walked back with a ten-liter plastic water container in each hand.

Mi lo and Dom phrug regularly followed Mother when she fetched water in the early morning. The water kettle was boiling when Mother and her followers returned from the river. Mother washed her face in warm water in a metal basin and added tea leaves to the kettle. After offering seven copper bowls of fresh water to the deity images on the altar (a large brown-colored wooden cabinet), she made an incense offering. The final step was putting an aluminum butter lamp containing tea with small pieces of butter on the altar before the deity images.

When it was time for breakfast, Mother or I made *rtsam pa* (barley flour mixed with dried cheese, butter, and hot milk tea) for each family member and put a wooden plate of wheat bread and bowls of milk tea on the table. We had breakfast together.

One morning in 2010, about 150 of our yaks went missing. Only the milk yaks were in an enclosure. Mother woke Father and informed him, he guessed they had gone to the fenced grassland near our home, but he didn't find them there. It was still dark. Father, 'Brug kho, and I went separately to different places looking for the yaks. Father went to the neighbors' fenced grassland while 'Brug kho and I went to the mountains separately.

Father's relative, Kun mtsho (b. ~1931), was visiting and worriedly got up. Mother was doing morning chores and was also very worried. Father finally found them in the mountains of our neighbor's land. Such occurrences were frequent.

AFTER BREAKFAST

Chores started right after breakfast and might have included, as needed, treating livestock for parasitosis and respiratory diseases, sheep shearing, and family religious rituals.

Father helped Mother milk because most of the milking yaks kicked during milking, and some were prone to butt. Father calmed them, scratching their manes and ears and gently speaking to them. He also hobbled the yaks. As the yaks got older, their front legs also required hobbling. This was related to *sgo*,[14] a term suggesting a family's animals' characteristics and behaviors related to the family. For instance, people mentioned a certain family by name and commented that their yaks were big and tall, their female yaks were rowdy, and so on. My family's livestock were described as rowdy, strong, and large, which my parents attributed to our *sgo*.

After milking, Mother put a large plastic bucket of milk from around twenty yaks in the refrigerator, swept the floor, and cleaned the food and water containers while Father sipped a bowl of milk tea and smoked a Yan'an cigarette.[15]

Around ten AM, we drove milk yaks and the other yaks out

[14] 'Function' 'methods'.

[15] See https://shorturl.at/tFVZ9, 27 December 2021 for more on this cigarette.

of the yak enclosures to the fenced grassland. The yaks went where they wanted in the fenced grassland.

I pulled on my plastic gloves to collect yak dung and pile it near the female yak enclosure. In mid-autumn, we broke the dung into pieces and scattered it on the ground. After around five days, the dung had dried and was the best fuel during the coldest days because it burned longer, like coal.

When I was a child, we had no gloves for collecting yak dung. After collecting, removing the odor from our hands and arms was challenging. A long while was required to eliminate the yak dung odor. Later that day, we washed our hands and arms with laundry detergent or soap to remove the odor.

I hated collecting yak dung, especially on sunny summer days. The dung was heavy, and the sun burned my neck and face. Klu mo used a metal basin, but it was too heavy for me, so I just took one or two piles without a basin. We piled the dung in one place and spread it on the ground near the *nor rdang* 'place where yaks are tied'.

Yak dung was collected differently during the various seasons. In summer, we spread the dung on the ground. It couldn't be too thin or too thick. If it was too thin, it broke into pieces when it dried. If it was too thick, it wasn't easy to dry. Klu mo encouraged, "Don't spread the dung too thin or too thick. If you don't do this well, you will suffer from rumors and run out of fuel in the future." Rain could come at any time, so we piled the dung up when it rained and spread it again when the sun came out.

Klu mo wouldn't allow me to squat while collecting yak dung, because people would say I was lazy, so I stooped, which made my back sore.

A woman without piles of yak or sheep dung was labeled lazy.

In winter, Mother and Klu mo collected dung early before breakfast. Because winter days were short, they began chores, including collecting yak dung, around six AM.

In spring, frozen yak-dung easily broke into bits when it warmed. The best collection time was early morning when the dung was frozen and did not easily break. The dung was put in a

plastic bag, carried out of the enclosure, and spread on the ground, where it took about a week to dry.

When my family herded sheep, Mother, Klu mo, and I collected sheep dung after the sheep were released. Elders said it was inauspicious to sweep the livestock enclosures while the livestock were present because it might bring evil and bad luck. My family used a big bamboo broom to sweep up the sheep dung, In the summer, Mother and Sister collected *spen ma* 'shrubby cinquefoil' to make small brooms.

The place for drying dung was important. In front of the house, livestock enclosure, and near the *thal spungs* were inappropriate, because many people, including family members and others, often visit these areas. However, my parents regard them as impure because of the tradition of using dung to offer incense and ignite fires. People also regarded a family's women as lazy and dirty when they saw dung there, though many younger people did not take this prohibition seriously. Nevertheless, certain families continued to observe these restrictions.

My parents also evaluated livestock health, especially yak health, through their dung. If blood or parasites were detected, the yaks were given barley or yellowish soil consecrated and given by *bla ma*. My parents did not know where *bla ma* obtained the soil, but they believed it had the holy *bla ma's* power.

Churning milk was the final morning chore. Mother put a big aluminum pot of milk on the stove to warm, assembled the churn components, and used her index finger to check the temperature. When she judged the milk was ready to churn, she placed the pot near the churn, poured a ladle of milk into the separator, and turned the handle. After a while, butter streamed out from one side and buttermilk from the other. It took an hour to finish. Mother never allowed children to churn milk. She said they turned the handle too quickly, so the butter became thinner, and if we turned the handle too slowly, butter would not form.

If nothing was urgent, afternoon chores focused on whatever needed to be done. When Father wasn't herding, he might have patched a motorcycle tire; repaired saddles, reins, and bridles; made new slingshots, yak nose pegs, or cloth ear tags for calves; mended our clothes; sharpened knives; and so on. He was a good man who made our life comfortable and cared for the family. Still, he was sometimes annoying when he treated those around him as assistants while doing the abovementioned things. I might have been sent to bring the sewing bag one minute and Mother might have been directed to fetch the scissors the next moment. Finally, 'Brug kho might have been sent to fetch wool cloth that Father had put somewhere in the house a few days earlier.

Mother might have taken laundry to the river to wash. She enjoyed this, especially in summer. When she first married and moved to Father's home, many of my paternal cousins talked about her, wondering what she did daily. One day, a cousin visited. Later, Mother heard that when others asked the cousin, "What does she do? Is she a hard worker?" the cousin replied, "She was washing clothes with a big package of laundry detergent. She didn't seem like a good woman."

At that time, the cousin held such beliefs because the act of washing clothes was not the sole criterion for defining a good or hardworking woman. Mother laughed every time she recounted this.

As the afternoon progressed, I typically boiled a kettle of milk tea and asked my parents to come rest. After we had tea, bread, or biscuits, I drove the yaks home. Sometimes some neighbors joined us and chatted until the herder and yaks came home.

It took around an hour to separate the milk yaks from the others and tether them and their calves. The calves were tethered away from their mothers, so they wouldn't nurse during the night. Sometimes, more than an hour was required because a calf or mother yak's eyes were tearing and needing treatment. Mother then returned home to get powdered tetracycline. Father and I

caught the calf or, if it was a mother yak, we hobbled it. Sometimes some calves or yaks lost their neck ties, so we put on new ones. They would run about wildly without neck ties, so we had to catch them with ropes.

When we returned home, it was usually dark. Mother started cooking, and I helped her discard ash from the stove or wash dishes. Father turned on the TV to check the weather forecast. Occasionally, if there was a guest for the night, Father chatted with the guest while Mother and I cooked as quickly as possible.

For supper, we typically cooked meat and noodles, and sometimes dumplings. It was rare for my family to have supper without meat. We chatted long after the meal, especially with guests. When it was time to go to bed, we ate yogurt and checked to ensure the yaks were safe. Mother made a new place for the guest on our *hu tse*, providing a pillow, two blankets, and a wool quilt.

FATHER AND I MOVE FROM THE WINTER PASTURE TO THE SPRING PASTURE

It was time to move to the spring pasture because there was little grass for the yaks in the winter pasture and because yaks began to give birth in March. Reaching the spring pasture required two additional days if the yaks had newborns. We waited until the newborn nursed when a mother gave birth on the way.

My parents and I would guess if the calf of a particular white female yak soon to give birth would be male or female, and its color several days before we moved. She often gave birth to white calves. Father observed white calves were cute but attracted lice and ticks.

This white yak was one of my family's favorite female yaks and one of about ten *tshe tar* 'sacred animals'[16] my family had that

[16] In 2022, my family had about ten sacred animals (One yak was dedicated to Dpal ldan lha mo and one yak was dedicated to Mgon rgan; three were dedicated to *bla ma*; two were dedicated to two

we did not sell or kill. We referred to this white female yak as Dpal ldan lha mo, the name of one of our two *srung ma* 'deities protecting the household and livestock'.

Father guessed the white yak's calf would be a brown female, while Mother and I guessed it would be a white female calf. In the end, we were all wrong. She gave birth to a white male calf.

Father and I stayed in a valley near our summer pasture on the first day, drove our yaks to a grassy place, and rode our horses near a small icy river where we unpacked and released the pack yak. Father tied our four horses near bushes and brought a kettle of water from the river. I collected dry yak dung and made a fire between a three-stone hearth to securely support the kettle.

We brought our belongings near the hearth to shield the fire from the wind. We were hungry and thirsty. Maybe that was why it seemed so long for the tea to boil. We ate barley flour and Tibetan cake and had tea. Even though the wind blew dust into our bowls, the food was delicious because we were so hungry.

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local men who were ill and the *bla ma* they consulted for divination told them to free animals). It was suggested that one sacred horse be dedicated to our male family deity and three sacred sheep to a local *bla ma*. My family deities are Dpal ldan lha mo and Mgon rgan. The former is the only female among the traditional 'Eight Guardians of the Law', and is depicted as dark blue with red hair, showing her wrathful nature as she crosses a sea of blood riding side-saddle on a white mule. The mule has an eye on its left rump where her angry husband's arrow stuck after she killed her son who was destined to be raised to end Buddhism. She used his skin as a saddle blanket. She has three eyes and is depicted using a human skull to drink human blood (https://bit.ly/3WDwaCs 20 November 2022). Mgon rgan is the six-armed Mahakala, the chief of Tibetan Dharma protector, has yellow hair rushing upwards, a blue and black body, three eyes opened angrily, a bloody wide-open mouth with sharp fangs, and wears a five-skull crown. Two hands hold an ax-knife and a skull bowl in front of the chest. The other four hands hold a skull drum and a human bone arm bracelet in the right hands. The left hands hold a rope and a trident. A bloody human head hangs from the chest. Mgon rgan stands on both legs in a lunge while stepping on the white Ganesha. Vajrasattva, the main deity, is in the middle of the sky. To the right of Vajrasattva is Yidi Protector with Zunqin Protector on the left. Five guardian gods are around him https://bit.ly/3EIksit 26 November 2022.

Father and I drank a kettle of hot tea that afternoon and then collected yak-dung to prepare for the night. We put fuel, food, clothes, and saddles in the same small stone enclosure where Father had stayed while herding sheep or driving yaks to the spring pasture. We checked on the yaks to see if other yaks were giving birth and if the newborn calves were safe. We sat near a boulder that blocked the cold wind. Father looked through his binoculars and saw some male deer with big antlers in a nearby mountain forest. As I sat gazing about, I suddenly said, "Father! Look! Horses! Maybe they are moving to the spring pasture."

"Whose horses would they be?"

"Oh no! Isn't that our Rta rgan nag ldang 'Black Horse'?"

"Let me check! Oh, they are our horses!"

"OK! I'll go get the three of them."

I was worried when I saw them moving forward. I was concerned they would have already passed over the mountain when I arrived. Darkness would descend soon.

The mare was tricky, rebellious, and often galloped away when you got near, leading the others to run with her. The more I ran up the mountain, the more it seemed to extend as though it was elastic. Of course, the horses were faster than me. I could hardly catch my breath, and beads of sweat dotted my nose. I ate some dusty snow to moisten my mouth, regained my breath, and got the energy to continue. I worried that if I didn't return the horses to our camp, we would have to walk, drive the yaks, and carry the newborn calves, which couldn't move much for some hours after birth. I was also concerned that it would soon turn dark and wolves might attack. Nothing was there except for birds. Father and our yaks were at the foot of the mountain.

I finally reached the mountaintop, but I couldn't see the horses. Then I saw Father waving his right hand to the east, which meant they were near me. I thought if I suddenly got behind them, they would run in the direction they were heading, so I moved so that I would appear in front of them. This trick worked. They were there, so I walked calmly to the end of the rope tied to the mare's reins. I knew I would have them all if I got to her first because the others always followed her.

After tying them to a boulder together, I was so furious that I threw stones at them. Then I lay on the ground in huge relief and almost burst into tears with a bloody taste in my mouth.

When I returned from chasing the horses, Father was walking with a wheat flour bag of yak dung tied to his back with a sash. He carried a newborn calf under each arm while driving the yaks near the place where we would sleep that night.

"You got them. Great job!"

"Yes, they almost got away today. We're lucky."

"Yeah, those defiant horses! We'll ride them tomorrow until they get tired," Father said comfortingly.

After we packed the yak-dung that Father had collected on one horse, I led it to our camp. Father brought the calves near our place.

It was still windy and cold. I unpacked the sacked yak dung from the horse, tied the horses to a nearby boulder, and arranged three stones for a hearth behind the stone enclosure where we would sleep that night. I never collected deer dung. My parents said deer dung smoke was good for the eyes because it had a lot of herbs. When Father came, we made a fire and began heating a kettle of milk tea. I went to get the torch charged from a small solar panel I had put on a rock facing the sun. Father led the horses near the yaks, tethered them, and hobbled two of them.

After Father returned, he and I drank milk tea and ate cooked meat we had brought from home. I sat on the blanket I used as a saddle blanket. Father sat on another blanket. We each used willow sticks to spread the fire to be warmer. We added yak and deer dung and willow branches to make the flames bigger. We could see some of the yaks near us. I said, "The flames may frighten wolves away."

"Yes," Father said confidently, although maybe it was untrue, and added, "The place we chose for yaks today is a good one with grass and is safe from wolves. A few years ago, when I drove yaks alone, I left them at the *go 'dabs* 'foot of a rocky mountain' and slept near them. The yaks ran at midnight, so I took my torch to see what was happening. Three wolves were circling the yaks in preparation to attack the smaller, weaker ones. I

frantically shouted and shone the torch at the wolves, but they ran around the yaks separately. Luckily, the yaks didn't run away. The bigger ones were trying to gore the wolves. I went back to pack up, get the horses, and then drove the yaks away from that place. It was a lucky night with no female yaks giving birth. It was dawn when we reached the mountaintop where we rested, and I slept for a while."

"What if the wolves attack yaks tonight? We have newborn calves?" I said in concern.

"They will not. Do you know why? Wolves dare not attack animals on steep rocky mountains."

I was relieved to hear that.

"We'll put the newborn calves somewhere relatively warm and safe."

Warmed up after drinking hot milk tea, Father and I turned on the flashlight and walked to the newborn calves. I held the torch while Father carried the calves one by one to a spot near our campsite.

After Father and I returned to the fire, we added more dung and made a place to sleep in a stone-walled enclosure. Father had noticed this enclosure sometime earlier. Sheep herders had made it. It had a rough floor, making it difficult to find a comfortable place to sleep. It was a very long night. I couldn't sleep because of my worries. I imagined, "What if one of the yaks above us accidentally stumbles, sending rocks tumbling down on us? Will wolves attack the yaks, especially the newborns? What should we do if the horses are gone when we get up in the morning? ... "

A small flame was all that was left of our fire. Father's snores and the sound of the wind were all I could hear. Stars lit up the sky. Such a quiet and unsafe night made me recall when Dom prug was young and healthy and with Father and me in the same place. I felt so calm and safe because Dom prug barked all night, protecting Father, our yaks, and me. I missed Dom prug.

I woke up to a cold breeze and couldn't fall back asleep. I saw a bright star in the eastern sky, signaling it was time to get up, an interpretation I often heard from Mother. But it was still dark.

After Father woke and turned on the flashlight to see if the

yaks were there, I asked if it was time to get up. He said, "Yes," so I got up, made a fire, and put a kettle of half-frozen water on the three-stone hearth.

Meanwhile, Father got up and packed everything except the food. We had a quick breakfast, got the pack yak, and packed what we had readied. As Father got the horses ready, I drove the yaks together and looked for newborn calves and yaks behind the rocky mountain.

When I returned, Father was leading the horses and driving the yaks. He asked if any yaks and newborn calves were still on the rocky mountain.

We started for the mountaintop, the border of our summer and autumn pastures, at about eight AM. Father checked if the yaks, especially the disobedient ones, were still in the herd. The newborns were following their mothers. We followed the yaks, not driving them, and eventually reached the summer pasture. On the way, we returned for a newborn its mother had left, finding him in a small hole. I got off my horse, picked him up, and gave him to Father, who was mounted on his horse.

When we caught up with the yaks, Father said the calf had urinated on him. The mother yak was looking for her calf among the yaks. Father called, "*Dgo, dgo, dgo...*" and she ran to us, nursed her calf for a short time, and then followed the other yaks.

A bit later, Father said a female yak was giving birth, so we drove the yaks hurriedly to where it was warm. We reached a *mtsher sa* 'place where a family had lived' near a river. We unpacked the pack yak and tied the horses near where the yaks were grazing. We waited until the female yak had finished giving birth. Father made a three-stone hearth while I collected dried yak dung and filled a one-liter bottle with water from a nearby stream. Father blew on the fire to make the flames stronger while I sat.

Father asked, "Where are the horses?"

They were not where we had tied them. I climbed to the top of a boulder and saw them running away, so I ran after them. The mare ran here and there when I got near, with the other horses following her. I tried to catch the rope tied to her reins. When I almost had it, she ran again. Finally, I got them! I was so angry I

again wanted to throw stones at them, hoping to break their ribs! But I didn't, because I was hungry and tired.

When I brought the horses back to our camp, Father had boiled milk tea and made *rtsam pa* for both of us and was waiting for me. I rested as we drank milk tea and ate candy. Father checked to see if the newborn calf could move with its mother and found the mother yak had taken her baby near the other yaks. Two other calves were resting nearby as their mothers grazed while closely watching their calves.

When it was time to move, we packed our gear on the pack yak and horses and extinguished the fire. Most of the yaks had gone. We drove those that remained with their newborns. The calves were now strong and energetic because we had rested there.

Later we passed a small mountain and saw our yaks running toward our destination. It seemed they were happy to reach the spring pasture. It was impossible to catch the yaks if we followed the pace of the newborns, so Father told me to go stop them.

I rode the black mare, stopped the yaks, and waited for Father. When the yaks were trying to escape, I chased them here and there and then noticed two wolves looking for something to eat. I guess the newborns had attracted them. Eventually, Father and the newborns arrived.

We rested and then started again. On the way, Father and I took turns stopping the yaks when we couldn't catch up with them and drove the newborns slowly as though they were turtles. The calves were easily tired, waggled their little tails, and lay down. The mother yaks worried when the other yaks ran ahead, and their calves hadn't followed and would return. It was tiresome for us all - the mother yaks, their calves, Father, and me.

We finally reached the spring pasture after crossing a small, river filled with ice that made it wider and more dangerous to cross. Next, we had to pass a family at a very narrow spot in the road. I saw a grandmother and her granddaughter driving their yaks to the river to fetch water. I was in a hurry, so I didn't greet them. As Father drove the newborns behind the other yaks, the black mare, and me, I galloped after the yaks.

Suddenly, I heard a noise combined with loud crying, loud talking, and loud horse whinnies. I felt numb when I saw the horse Father had been riding running toward me. I left the yaks and rushed back to where Father anxiously walked, a scarf covering his face. I couldn't tell how he felt, but his hurried steps told me something bad had happened.

Father explained that one of the new mothers had butted a girl while she was walking and using her phone. She was close behind the female yak when Father noticed. Father warned her, but then she ran by the female yak. The mother yak probably thought she was running away with her calf, so she ran after her and butted her. When the girl stopped by the fence, Father rushed over and grabbed the mother yak's ears to stop her, saving the girl from injury. The mother yak noticed her calf was behind her and still butted whoever was near her, so we had no choice but to leave her behind and drive the other yaks to our destination.

Mother and our spring neighbor welcomed us with meat and noodles cooked in our adobe house. We felt relief, but many worries remained as we ate.

HERDING YAKS ON THE SUMMER PASTURE

After breakfast in the spring pasture on an early summer morning, my parents asked me to go with 'Phag mo rdo rje to the summer pasture to check on our yaks. I packed some clothes in a backpack. Phag mo rdo rje was not pleased to go. My parents also didn't want him to go, but his parents urged him to come. Many young people in my home community didn't want to go to summer pasture because conditions are harsh. It is cold when it rains, it is hard to herd livestock, often foggy, etc. Almost everything is inconvenient.

We each carried a backpack. Though it was hard to go to the summer pasture on foot, we chose to walk. Phag mo rdo rje didn't seem happy, so to cheer him up, I said, "We'll eat some snacks after we pass that mountain. There's also a river there. It's a nice place."

He said nothing but later asked questions about that place, his unhappiness seemingly forgotten. An hour later, we ate snacks

near the river, took pictures of flowers with our smartphones, cut turkey rhubarb stalks with sharp stones, and took refuge from sudden rainstorms in the shelter of huge boulders. It was a nice experience, and Phag mo rdo rje had perked up.

Phag mo rdo rje was a curious thirteen-year-old boy full of whys and hows. His mother, Klu mo, describes him as very talkative. On the way, he asked me many questions, such as "Why is this flower purple?"

After many questions, I said nothing as we continued climbing the mountains.

We finally reached Klu mo's tent at five PM. She was collecting yak dung when their watchdog began barking at us, but once he recognized Phag mo rdo rje, he stopped and came trotting to us, wagging his tail. Klu mo greeted us, amazed to learn we had walked, and cooked meat and boiled milk tea for us.

A pha lhu kho came later from herding sheep, and we enjoyed the food together. A pha lhu kho reported that my family's yaks were in the mountains, where they often stayed, which meant I wouldn't have to check on them that day. After the meal, Phag mo rdo rje went to a neighbor's home. A pha lhu kho played his flute, and Klu mo and I went to drive the milk yaks back home.

For dinner, Klu mo cooked mutton and boiled dried noodles. The most delicious food in the world is mutton on the bone. When Phag mo rdo rje tried to break a bone to get the marrow, Klu mo warned, "Be careful! Please don't break the knife."

A pha lhu kho joked, "Never feed your child marrow."

Finally, he and his son divided the marrow.

Klu mo's family goes to bed early and gets up early, especially in summer, so we all went to bed early that night. We all slept on the same bed platform that Klu mo and A pha lhu kho had made of sand and soil coated with mud.

Klu mo got up to milk at around four AM. Noticing I was awake, she said, "You don't have to get up early. I'll check on the yaks." I was pleased.

Later, A pha lhu kho got up, boiled tea, offered incense with roasted barley and juniper leaves near the sheep enclosure,

returned, chanted scriptures, and offered tea to the deities in the front of the tent. Phag mo rdo rje and I also got up and washed our faces in a plastic basin. Normally, we don't use warm water to wash our faces in summer, but in our summer pasture, the mornings are often cold, so I poured hot water into the basin. Phag mo rdo rje washed his face but not his neck. A pha lhu kho noticed and said, "If you don't wash your neck for the whole summer like this, the dirt will collect, and you won't be able to clean it before school.

"It's OK. I don't care."

"Your teachers will make you care."

We all laughed together.

Klu mo finished milking, drove the female yaks toward the mountains, returned to the tent with a big bucket of milk, and washed her face and hands. We had milk tea with *rtsam pa* and wheat bread.

After breakfast, A pha lhu kho told me to stay with Klu mo while he went to the mountains to watch the yaks, so I stayed with Klu mo that day collecting yak and sheep dung, fetching water, and so on. I visited the neighbor's family and talked with them while Phag mo rdo rje played with the neighbor's kids, his only familiar playmates in the summer pasture.

When the men left for herding, the neighbor woman, Klu mo, and I met, talked, and laughed after finishing our chores. Children played near the small river, where families fetched water while we women watched the calves.

A sunny and happy day ended as the herders drove their flocks of sheep home from far in the distance. Klu mo boiled milk tea and prepared bread and *rtsam pa* for A pha lhu kho, who drove the sheep near the tent, and then came home to eat. Klu mo asked Phag mo rdo rje and me to get the calves. After tethering the calves, Klu mo and I drove the female yaks home.

After sunset, darkness rose from the earth to the sky. We finished our day's work and retreated to the tent to rest, drink tea, and chat as usual.

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Early the next morning, Klu mo got up and went to milk the yaks.

She woke me at dawn and said she couldn't see my family's yaks, so I got up. Klu mo helped me put some slices of bread and candies in my bag.

"Don't go far looking for them if they're not at the mountaintops."

"OK!"

"Come back and herd the calves. A pha lhu kho or I will go get them."

"Sure."

"If the yaks are there, don't stay all day in the mountains. Come back to eat."

"OK, Klu mo."

She ensured everything with me was good, even though the calves and female yaks were mooing louder and louder, calling her to come quickly. Klu mo's female yaks and calves are accustomed to her milking early, so they start mooing when they detect Klu mo is up.

I left, and she went to milk.

It was a chilly morning, as mornings in the summer pasture always are. I hadn't climbed the mountains for a while, so I took frequent breaks: thirty steps, a break, fifty steps, a longer break. When you are eager to get somewhere, the more you go, the longer the distance seems. When I passed over a hill near the top, I saw some yaks atop the mountains in the distance, but I was unsure if they were my family's yaks. I used Father's binoculars and could identify one of our milk yaks and an old male yak. They were the last and moving forward. I was happy that the yaks were there, but whether I could reach them was another question.

After another tiring climbing period, I reached the mountaintop and saw my family's yaks moving to a notch in the mountain. On the west side of the notch was our neighbor community's autumn pasture, where our yaks should not go. It was possible the *rtswa srung* 'grassland guards' were there and would fine me if my family's yaks grazed in that pasture.

Thankfully, I caught up with the yaks at the notch as they slowly passed through. A female yak ran to our neighbor's community pasture with her calf, and the other yaks started to

follow. I couldn't head her off, so I used my slingshot to shoot stones at them, driving them back to the mountaintops of our summer pasture.

Next, I went to a creek, washed my face, drank some water, sat on a rock while eating a piece of bread, and went to where the female yak had run with her calf. I found her with some other families' yaks. I tried to drive her back, but she ran here and there with her calf. Some yaks ran with her. I stopped chasing her because I worried she would run to the foot of the mountain and not return. Normally, my family's yaks don't leave with other yaks, except for some young yaks, who go to different places with other families' yaks and do not return until Father drives them back, so I left her there.

I went back and found the yaks at the same place. Some were grazing while others were lying down. Most calves were lying in the sun in groups. The herders (both men and women) were shouting at their livestock and shooting their slingshots. I lay near the calves and went to sleep.

The sound of a slingshot woke me. My yaks were gone. A man was driving his sheep and shooting stones with his slingshot. He stopped when he noticed I was there. He was a young man from my community.

"Hello!"

"Hello! Have you seen my yaks?"

"Don't worry! Your yaks are over there," he said, pointing to my relief.

"Why isn't your father herding your yaks?" he asked as he sat near me.

"He's at home, so I'm herding these days."

"Good! Today, many young people don't herd yaks or sheep after they attend school. You're a good herder!"

"Thanks, but I'm not as good a herder as you."

"I'm not a good herder. Just look, I'm driving my sheep back home early. A good herder would stay longer and let the sheep eat more grass."

"OK."

"I didn't see you sleeping here and almost hit your head

with my slingshot. Didn't you sleep well last night?"

"I did."

"Good, when are you going to marry? Where's your boyfriend from?"

"I don't have a boyfriend."

"I know you have one."

"So why are you asking me?"

"I just want to know more about him."

"OK."

"Hey, will you herd yaks here tomorrow?"

"I don't know. Maybe."

"Can I come to your place tonight?"

"Oh, please! I've got to go."

"I'm serious!"

"Sorry! I have to drive my yaks home."

"I will herd my sheep here tomorrow. I hope you'll be here."

I said nothing as he drove his sheep back to his home, and I went near my yaks.

When men flirted with Klu mo and other women, the women said little in the beginning, so I also said little. I wanted to say more, but I restrained myself.

That day with the yaks ended peacefully, except for the female yak that had not returned to join the yaks. I was bothered, thinking about her repeatedly. All the herders except me had gone home with their livestock. I drove my yaks to a hill, where they would hopefully spend the night. It was almost dark when I finally returned to our tent, where Klu mo and other family members were waiting to have dinner with me. A neighbor kid visited, so we played card games after dinner until Klu mo asked us to sleep, so the neighbor kid, Phag mo rdo rje, and I slept in another tent near the female yaks' enclosure that night.

▪▪▪

The sound of raindrops plopping on the tent and strong wind woke me at midnight. I worried the yaks would be gone since they often move about when it rains. I waited for Klu mo to get up because I could then get everything prepared and check on the yaks. If they

were gone, I planned to go into the mountains early and find them, so the grassland guards would not catch the yaks and me.

I couldn't sleep, wondering if I should leave without telling anyone. If the yaks were there, I could stay until sunrise, and then when the herders came, I would ask A pha lhu kho to check and return for breakfast. But I dared not because I remembered a story Klu mo had told me about a wolf:

One early foggy morning, I went on horseback to check my family's yaks. My horse suddenly stopped, raised his head high, didn't move, and his nose whistled. Suddenly, I noticed a wolf sitting in front of us, which frightened me because wolves usually run when they see people. This wolf just sat there, watching us. My horse and I hurried in another direction. After a bit, I looked back and saw the wolf following us. I was so scared I chanted *Sgrol ma* scripture and continued up the mountain without looking back. When we finally reached the mountaintop, I saw the wolf leaving.

After a while, I was frightened by something moving near the tent entrance. I thought a yak, or another animal was entering, but Klu mo was searching for her rain boots. Noticing I was awake, she said, "Don't get up early today. It's raining. I'll check on the yaks."

When there's something to do, Klu mo always tries to do the hardest tasks and leaves the easiest ones for other family members, including me. I knew it was so hard for her to milk the yaks in the rain, check on them in the mountains without breakfast, and do all the home chores after returning, so I said, "I'll go check on the yaks. If they aren't in the mountains, I'll return, and you go."

She agreed. I put the binoculars and some bread in my bag and took a big piece of plastic to wear in the rain. We also use plastic to cover fuel, food, and bedding when it rains. It was still dark, but I could see my way as I walked. As it grew lighter, the wind stopped, but it was still raining. I covered myself with the plastic, which worked well with no wind.

I saw some yaks and realized they were not my family's.

Then I noticed some other yaks moving up the mountain and I rushed to catch up with them. When I got near, I confirmed they were also not my family's yaks. What a disappointing moment!

As I continued to climb, I saw what I thought were my family's yaks moving toward the *lab tshe* on mountaintop. A neighbor community pasture is behind that *lab tshe*. I shouted at the yaks, but they ignored me and continued to move forward. I was so thirsty that I stopped to drink water from a small stream before running after them.

Luckily it stopped raining. The yaks were gone when I got to a mountain ridge. I looked around and saw them running after one another to the bottom of the mountain. I anxiously wondered how I could get them back from such a deep rocky mountain valley. I could only think of running after them. I thought I was the earliest person out that morning, but then I saw a horseman ascending the mountain. Thinking he might be a grassland guard coming to demand cash or a yak as a fine, I considered what to say.

As the distance between us lessened, he continued without speaking, only glancing at me. Meanwhile, I ran after my yaks. By now, many yaks were lying in the fresh, vibrant grass and flowers. In contrast, my family yaks, who were new to this place, ran about energetically. I ran after them, full of worry about the grassland guard.

It was warmer here than at the mountaintop, so my back was soon wet with sweat, and the heavy bag rubbed my back as I ran. I was confused when my family yaks mingled with the other yaks. I couldn't separate them.

I saw the uncastrated yaks running toward other yaks, looking for mates, raising their tails, and bellowing. I wanted to put my bag and coat somewhere and chase them, but then I knew I would have to return and pick them up.

In the end, I ran to a creek, drank water, and rested briefly. I knew I couldn't drive them together yet. I would have to wait and worry until they calmed down.

After a while, I went in different directions to drive them slowly together. I realized that when yaks ran excitedly, it was best to let them run until they calmed. They weren't hungry because

they could graze twenty-four hours a day, unlike other family yaks, which we drove home at night after they had grazed during the day. Still, they greedily chewed the fresh grass. I had to drive them almost individually, making me tired, thirsty, and angry. I remained anxious about the grassland guards.

I didn't want to look at the long, rugged path to the top of the mountain. It made me feel less energetic and hopeless. As I drove the yaks, many moved like turtles, pretending to be tired. It was obvious that they were reluctant to leave. I knew they were pretending because they were energetic and vigorous when some tried to escape. I used my slingshot to pelt them with stones, but I did leave one old female yak behind because I didn't want to force her.

Then I noticed a man approaching, who seemed not to be a grassland guard. He was wearing a black coat, a dark red knitted hat, and carrying a pair of binoculars. He wasn't shouting. When a grassland guard caught herders and their livestock on their pasture, they shouted and screamed.

As we got nearer, we recognized and greeted each other. He was one of my paternal relatives in his thirties. I was relieved because he was from our neighboring community. I imagined if the grassland guards came, he would help me. He asked if I had seen some female yaks at the bottom of the mountain and described their color and appearance. I said I hadn't noticed, so he used his binoculars to check and said some of his yaks were there and added, "Drive your yaks slowly, I will catch up with you, and we can drive our yaks together."

When the old female yak had almost caught up with me, my relative was behind her. As I drove the yaks, my relative's yaks gradually joined my yaks. We rested near a small stream flowing down the mountain and ate bread from my bag.

The yaks began to separate, so we went in different directions after them, driving them back together. My relative was skilled at this.

We reached the top of the mountain at around four PM. My relative separated his yaks from mine and left. I slowly drove my yaks to where they had stayed the night before, and I stayed

with them until twilight. Father often didn't leave the yaks until they lay down, because they wouldn't go anywhere until the next morning.

I left secretly and trudged back to our tent after some disobedient yaks lay down. I was hungry and couldn't see much because it was dark and getting darker. I saw a flashlight coming toward me. A pha lhu kho and Phag mo rdo rje were worried and had come looking for me. As we entered the tent, Klu mo said, "Gosh, we were scared! We thought something bad had happened to you. I prepared milk tea and boiled meat for you this afternoon earlier than usual because you left so early this morning. I thought you would come back earlier. We waited until it got dark, and then I asked them to check on you."

"I'm fine, don't worry. I just waited for the yaks to lie down."

"You don't have to stay so late next time. It's OK. They won't go anywhere."

"I was frightened when we turned the light on you and saw a big, long shadow. I thought it was a monster," Phag mo rdo rje excitedly interjected.

"I never saw a monster. Does your monster look like a shadow?" A pha lhu kho said, and we laughed as father and son started teasing each other.

Klu mo offered me a bowl of milk tea and then gave each of us a bowl of noodles and meat. This delicious meal and the homey atmosphere dissolved my tiredness.

▪▪▪

I was ready to check the yaks the next morning when I met Klu mo coming down the hill behind the tent. She said the yaks were gone again. I was terrified, but she said, "Don't worry! I called Father, and he said he would get the yaks. He is coming now. Maybe the yaks went to our autumn pasture."

"What else did Father say?"

"If you want to return home, you can go now. If not, he'll come this afternoon, and you can ride the horse tomorrow."

"Why did you call Father?"

"I asked if the yaks had gone to our spring pasture. Father

realized the yaks were probably gone and thought you couldn't find them."

"Did you tell Father our yaks went to our neighbor community's place yesterday?"

"No."

"Good! I don't want our parents to know about it!"

"I understand."

That was the last time I herded yaks in the summer pasture in 2020. I returned home that day, happy because I didn't have to run after the yaks every morning with many concerns and didn't have to worry about the unstable weather. Father endures what most of us don't want to experience. His true grit makes him skillful and calm, regardless of what happens.

Later I heard from Klu mo that the yaks didn't go anywhere from when Father herded, despite rainy and stormy days. This upset me because the yaks had scattered every time I had herded them on the summer pasture. I don't know why.

GRASSLAND GUARDS

AN ANGRY GUARD

In 2017, A pha lhu kho and my family left our yaks in the mountains and stayed in the autumn pasture. We didn't move to the summer pasture. We checked on the yaks every six or seven days. Then one day 'Brug kho and A pha lhu kho went to the summer pasture to drive the yaks to the autumn pasture when it was time to move.

'Brug kho and A pha lhu kho had romantic ideas about how they would herd the yaks together, drive them from the summer to the autumn pasture, spend the night without bedding, and carry only a small amount of food. Their confidence and positive outlook comforted their listeners and gave these two young herders more confidence. When they left, they rode A pha lhu kho's motorcycle to a place near our summer pasture and then walked.

It was afternoon when they reached where our yaks often

stayed, but they were gone. Locals paid extra attention to their livestock before they moved from summer to autumn because it was not convenient to locate missing livestock and drive them to the autumn pasture once they had moved. A pha lhu kho asked a local herder about our yaks. He replied they had been on the mountaintop in the morning. Thanking him, they hurried to the mountain ridge where some yaks and around twenty calves were together, but others were missing. Then they saw two men driving a herd of yaks at the bottom of the mountain toward our winter pasture. 'Brug kho and A pha lhu kho were unsure if those were our yaks. When A pha lhu kho saw some *nor rtags can* 'noticeable yaks', he was persuaded the yaks at the bottom of the mountain were ours.

The men continued to drive the yaks, which puzzled 'Brug kho and A pha lhu kho. They wondered where they would drive the yaks because grassland guards usually drove intruding livestock into an enclosure until a herder came to claim them.

When 'Brug kho and A pha lhu kho reached the yaks, they identified them as ours. A pha lhu kho asked, "Why are you driving these yaks? Why didn't you keep them in an enclosure?"

The older guard arrogantly replied, "We were trying to drive these yaks away from our place."

A pha lhu kho pleaded, "Please don't do that. We're here for the yaks. We won't let our yaks come here again."

"Give me some money or a yak?"

"We are herding yaks and didn't bring any cash."

"OK. Fine. Give me a yak."

"Please, don't ask for that. Our calves are at the mountaintop. If it is much later, they will be lost, or wolves will attack them. This is the last time. We will never let our yaks come here again."

"I don't care about your calves or yaks. Pay the fine."

"I know you are my father-in-law's relative. It's not good to have conflict. It's silly?"

"Don't bullshit. I don't care. Pay the fine. Otherwise, I won't let your yaks go."

'Brug kho interrupted, "What if the calves left were yours?

Please don't do that."

The man grew angrier and said, "You arrogant young man! Shut up! Pay the fine!"

A pha lhu kho was angry after this quarrel, so he and 'Brug kho tried to drive the yaks back. But the two guards drove the yaks here and there. When 'Brug kho and A pha lhu kho tried to drive the yaks to the right, the other two men drove them to the left. When the sun had almost set, the older guard said, "You must promise to pay the fine after you drive the yaks home."

They promised but never paid the fine.

'Brug kho and A pha lhu kho drove yaks to the mountaintop quickly because many calves were there. They worried a lot about the calves. They imagined searching for the calves if they had separately run away. Would wolves attack them? After a grueling and tiresome drive, they reached the mountaintop. It was now dark, and it had started to rain. They had brought no rain gear, and the calves were still there. They desperately drove the yaks to our summer pasture by the *lab tse*. They saw what they thought were wolves running toward them. The yaks were frightened and tried to run away. As they got close, they noticed that those were the calves, not wolves.

They were happy to see the calves but were unsure whether they were all there. 'Brug kho and A pha lhu kho didn't know where to stay that night, so they drove the yaks to Nyin 'breng, where many boulders make it a good place to avoid the rain. That day they had only drunk some water and had eaten nothing.

They looked for a place to rest and make a fire but couldn't find any dry yak dung. They wrang out their wet clothes and rested. 'Brug kho later described it as the longest night they had ever experienced. The next morning, they got the yaks together and drove them home.

Later, family members and cousins teased them about their romantic ideas about herding.

PHOTOGRAPHS

YAKS

FIG 14. Rgya rus 'Brown Calf' and its mother (Rgya tho ma 'Brown Female Yak', Rkun tus ma 'Thief'). When the calves romp and run on the grassland, this mother yak runs with them, her tail raised excitedly. We laugh and say she is silly. When we drive the yaks home, she often behaves like a calf, secretly trying to nurse other female yaks. We stop her when we notice. My parents scold her because she steals milk from calves, which explains the name "Rkun tus ma." (2020).

FIG 15. Sre tho ma 'White-spotted Female Yak' is one of Mother's favorites. Mother's brother gave her to us about ten years ago. She is docile, has long teats that make milking easier, and gives a lot of milk. All the female yaks are my parents' favorites, which doesn't mean that male yaks are not also favorites. My parents take extra care of the female yaks because they give birth and give milk. My parents often comment that their life is not easy. Most of my family's mature female yaks *rkyang rtsebs* 'give birth yearly'. My parents think this makes them weak. Father decided that the female yaks should not give birth for one year, and in 2021, he bought a liquid drug and injected the female yaks that give birth annually (2020).

FIG 16. One of my family's sacred animals, a female yak, was freed for Dpal ldan lha mo. This female yak protects our other livestock. In 2020, when Father and I drove our yaks from winter to spring pasture, she gave birth to a cute white calf. Father had worried that the female yak didn't have enough grass to eat that day. The yellow cord in the female yak's mane is *srung rtags* 'protector's emblem' that Father made (2021).

FIG 17. The amulet around this female yak's neck protects it from wolf attack. Father asked an acquaintance, a former monk, to make it. Locals invite him to chant scriptures and make amulets because they think he is reliable. My parents put this amulet on this yak when she was two years old; adorable and gentle. In 2022, she was the mother of a cute calf that resembled her during her calfhood. The female yak didn't let her calf nurse for several days because Father separated the calf from her after birth, bringing the calf home on a snowy day, worried the calf would freeze to death. Later, my parents tied the female's front legs and held her horns to stop butting, forcing her to let the calf nurse (2022).

FIG 18. This sacred female yak was one of my family's oldest in 2021-2022. Father didn't stop her from going to the fenced grassland after watering the yaks one day in the winter pasture. The fenced grassland was protected when the yaks grazed on the mountains, so the grass there was lusher than on the mountains. From the very next day, she looked for chances to go there. We stopped her whenever we noticed, but she insisted on going to the fenced grassland, eventually exhausting Father's patience. Several days later, my parents stopped her again, but she continued looking for chances to enter the fenced grassland. This continued until she gave birth one morning, surprising us because we didn't expect her to give birth at her age. Afterward, my parents and I let her graze in the fenced grassland and gave her wheat flour with oat straw at night and in the morning (2022).

FIG 19. 'Dzi mo 'White Blazed Forehead'. Yaks are often named based on their appearance and color. We feed weak female yaks wheat flour in the morning and evening. The more flour 'Dzi mo was fed, the more reluctant she was to join the other yaks to graze in the mountains. She stood near the entrance of our house and followed whoever did chores outside, hoping to be fed more flour (2021).

FIG 20. The name of this female yak - Gwa tho ma - was based on the big blaze on her face. My parents said she gave birth when she was a *sum yar* 'three-year-old calf,' which is why she is small. When her calves grow larger, it seems she is their calf. My parents spoiled her by giving her wheat flour and letting her eat as much as she liked in the small enclosure where we stored dry grass. My parents went to the Township Town to shop one day. I herded yaks in the mountains that day and drove them home early in the afternoon because I had many other chores. After I left the yaks near our home, most soon drank from the creek and grazed. Gwa tho ma and some other yaks entered the small enclosure while I was doing house chores. Later, many yaks tried to enter the enclosure. I ran over, forced them out of the enclosure, and returned home to continue doing chores. Later, Gwa tho ma returned, broke the wooden board that served as the small enclosure's gate, and entered the enclosure with some other yaks. Tired of chasing her, I tied her to a pole with a rope around her neck. My parents didn't like to see her punished, so I released her after I drove the yaks into the yak enclosure before my parents returned home (2021).

FIG 21. Rnga lo ma 'Short-tail Female Yak' had a short tail, hence the name. She was disobedient and tried to run from the other yaks and go wherever she wanted, so my family members remembered her. One morning as we were about to drive the yaks out to graze, Father said Rnga lo ma was about to give birth, so we waited a while, but she didn't give birth. We left her in the yak enclosure. Later, when I checked, she had given birth and was licking her calf clean. Mother and I drove her to the fenced grassland after the calf could stand (2022).

FIG 22. Nag tho ma and Nag log. Most of our yaks have names, especially female yaks. Father was good at naming yaks. Nag tho ma had thick black hair and a big head. Nag log was her nickname. My family members gave yaks and calves names when they were special and cute. In 2022, Nag log gave birth to a calf that resembled her. We didn't drive our yaks home one night when there was a blizzard, so my parents worried newborns would freeze to death. Most of the yaks had returned home early the next morning, but some had not. Father told me to drive them home after breakfast and carefully check if there were any newborn calves. The yaks were coming down the mountain when I checked after a hurried breakfast. I noticed Nag tho ma was coming with her calf behind the other yaks. Her calf was trying to catch up but stumbled and sometimes fell, but then got up and tried to follow his mother. After I returned from checking the mountains for any left-behind newborn calves, my parents put Nag tho ma and her calf in the small enclosure where we store oat straw. Later, we called the calf Nag log because he looked exactly like his mother (2022).

FIG 23. Srung rtags ma. According to my family, this female yak was special because she was born with two curled braids in her mane. My parents said she was a *g.yang chen* 'auspicious' calf born as a sacred yak, and we considered her a sacred animal. She became disobedient as she matured. Mother never milked her (2019).

FIG 24. Gwa ldang ma was a female yak from Mother's younger sister's family who primarily herded sheep. Of Aunt's five female yaks, four were sacred. Aunt said it was difficult to keep them together in the summer pasture, and asked my parents if their yaks could join my family's yaks. My parents agreed. A year later, Aunt said her family needed the milk and drove them to her home. However, Gwa ldang ma rejoined my family's yaks the next morning. Aunt took Gwa ldang ma to her home several times, but she always returned to my family's yaks. Finally, Aunt gave up, and my family cared for her. My parents liked this female yak because they often milked her, even though she was not my family's (2021).

FIG 25. Mtshe ge ma 'Mother of Twins' was dark blue and nursed two calves. One was her calf. The mother of the other had died when the calf was five months old. Mother tried to get other female yaks to nurse him, but only Mtshe ge ma would allow him to nurse. Mother said, "At first, Mtshe ge ma allowed him to nurse only when I was checking beside her, but about a month later, when Mtshe ge ma mooed, Mtshe ge ma's birth calf and the orphan calf would run to her. She would allow them both to nurse" (2021).

FIG 26. A strong female yak butted this female yak a few days before she gave birth. Later, she couldn't stand, which worried my parents because they knew she would soon give birth. The next morning, she did stand, so Father drove her to the fenced grassland and fed her wheat flour. She had many grubs and ticks. Father said this was why she was weak, so we poured *manjing* (Diazinon;0,0-Diethyl-0-(2-isopropyl-6-methyl-4-pyrimidinyl thiophosphate) on her back. She gave birth ten days later to a black male calf (2022).

FIG 27. This male yak had white spots on his head and mane, so we called him Sre tho but used his nickname, Sre b+ha. He was as big as a two-year-old when he was one year old and the strongest among his age group because two female yaks nursed him. Mother forced the mother of a calf that had died to nurse Sre tho, and later this female yak nursed him without my mother forcing her.

In 2022, Sre tho was four years old. One day in the winter pasture, Father tried to ride him when we drove the yaks to water, but Sre tho fell, and Father noticed he lacked strength, though he looked big and strong. We then fed him wheat flour and oat straw. Other yaks bullied him, so we often fed him with the calves. One afternoon, when Father and I drove our yaks home, we saw Sre tho jumping up and down with the calves, raising his tail. Father happily said that Sre tho was becoming stronger (2022).

FIG 28. Gwa ling was a white-headed male yak. My family believed he was auspicious. In 2020, we sold around thirty-two-year-old calves to a herdsman in a neighboring community. Several days later, when some of my family's yaks died, Father consulted a local *mo ba* 'diviner', who said, "An auspicious animal of your family is gone. This is why some of your family yaks died." My parents surmised the auspicious animal was one of the calves we sold, so Father returned to the family that had bought thirty calves, brought this calf back home, and our yaks stopped dying. My parents explained this was because Gwa ling had returned (2021).

FIG 29. Father often scratched G.yag rgan dkar ldang's 'White Pack Yak' mane and head when he was a calf. Later, he approached whoever was herding to be scratched. G.yag rgan dkar ldang was our only pack yak during movements between camps. In 2020, when Father and I drove our yaks from the winter to the spring pasture, we packed our gear on G.yag rgan dkar ldang. A mature, obedient pack yak, he still came to be scratched (2021).

FIG 30. My family's Mgon g.yag 'Sacred Yak of Mgon gon' is dedicated to Mgon gon, one of my family's deities. My parents said that a family's Mgon g.yag must be brown, which was why my family's previous Mgon g.yag were brown. However, this one was blue with *g.yang ra* 'auspicious curled hair' in its mane, so my parents thought he was a good choice for Mgon g.yag. Mgon g.yag was one of my family's pack yaks but broke one leg twice when he was around five, so we stopped packing him (2019).

FIG 31. Dung mgo ma 'Whitehead Female Yak' behaved badly, butting or kicking when Mother milked her. She had sharp horns that Father often held when Mother milked her (2021).

FIG 32. One day Father said, "Let's pierce her (Dung mgo ma) horns so she won't butt anyone." After we tied the yaks in the evening at around seven-thirty, I piled dried yak dung near the female yak enclosure, made a fire, and heated a metal tent stake. Meanwhile, Father hobbled Dung mgo ma's front feet. After I handed him the heated stake, he pressed the hot end to the horn to pierce it. The stake quickly cooled, so I heated it again. This process continued for about an hour until Father had made a hole through both horns. It was already dark, and we were about to finish when Mother called us for dinner (2020).

FIG 33. My parents liked this yak because she behaved like her mother, an obedient female yak. After her mother died, we called this female yak Sngo ldu ma 'Blue Female Yak' – her mother's name. Her mother remained in the fenced grassland one night when Sngo ldu ma (pictured below) was a calf. Her mother left the fenced grassland the next morning because her calf was in the yak enclosure. After she arrived, Mother milked her near our yak enclosure without tying her, which was impossible for our other female yaks (2021).

FIG 34. This calf's mother died when he was five months old. A blue female yak nursed him with her birth calf. My parents said the calves needed to be fed wheat flour, so we fed them every morning or evening with a basin of wheat flour. They were noticeably stronger and more energetic after about fifteen days. 'Brug kho and I drenched the yaks with a liquid drug because they had a lot of parasites. We caught them with a rope. When it was this calf's turn, Father looped the rope around the calf and pulled it back. The calf jumped up and tried to run like a pack yak trying to throw off the pack on its back. Father joked, "Be careful! This wild yak is going to butt us!" which made us all laugh (2021).

FIG 35. Rgya ling "Brown Horned Calf' is special because the day Father separated the weak yaks from the others, this calf accidentally ran with them. Father didn't force him back. Afterward, he often went to the gate of the fenced grassland, waiting for the weak yaks. The yaks were obsessed with the straw, so sometimes we gave them straw bales near our yak enclosure, but this calf only ate a little and then went to the fenced grassland gate, waiting for it to open. My parents described such behavior as "tricky," but they said nothing critical about this calf (2021).

FIG 36. Calves sometimes ate plastic bags, yak hair, and cloth before eating grass. Some older yaks also chewed on plastic bags and other garbage. A few of our family's yaks died from eating plastic bags and ropes. One afternoon, Father and I went to drive the yaks home. The calf in the picture below moved slowly and scratched his belly at times with his right foot. I said, "That calf isn't wild anymore."

Father watched the calf and later commanded, "Catch that calf."

I caught the calf and said, "Maybe that calf has lice on his belly."

Father said, "His mouth is watering. Something is stuck in his gullet."

He was right. The calf had eaten grass mixed with yak hair that was now stuck in its gullet. We pulled it out (2022).

FIG 37. 'Go be'u 'First Calf born in a Year' (2022). We put weak yaks to graze with the calf and his mother in the fenced grassland two or three days after this calf was born. When I drove them home, the calf was not with his mother one afternoon. The mother was not concerned about her calf, which meant she had nursed him. I looked for the calf but didn't find him. Later, Mother came, and we searched for hours but still didn't find him. Mother said a wolf might have attacked him, so we went home disappointedly. Suddenly, a noisy truck full of bags of dry sheep dung came rumbling along the rough dirt track near my family's fenced grassland, which woke the calf. To our surprise, he got up exactly where we had looked and ran toward the yaks. Mother commented that calves are hard to find when they sleep (2022).

FIG 38. We often called this yak Bag ldu rgya ling 'Uncastrated Horned Brown Yak'. Father bought him and another yak when they were three years old. My family had bought two other *brong tsha* 'wild yak' descendants earlier, but both died of illness.

Before we bought Bag ldu rgya ling and the other yak around 2009, most of my family's yaks had blue and white spots, and the calves were not strong. Father said *'brong tsha* were strong, and it was good to have a strong, wild uncastrated yak, so he bought them to become the herd sires.

Bag ldu rgya ling and the other calf were obedient when they were brought to my family's yaks. At first, they stayed together and lay together because they were afraid of the other yaks or not used to them. Though they followed the other yaks initially, they maintained a distance, but they later became the masters of the yaks. In the summer of 2021, Bag ldu rgya ling was very weak. The yaks were in the summer pasture, but one day he came home (to the spring pasture) alone. My parents were glad because they worried people would throw stones at him if he went to another family's fenced grassland or another community's pasture. Afterward, my parents let him go wherever he wanted in my family's grassland. He felt lonely several days later, came home at night, and returned to the grassland early the next morning. In 2022, Father freed Bag ldu rgya ling from being sold or slaughtered.

FIG 39. Rta nag ldang/Rta rgan nag ldang 'Black Horse' was a *tshe thar*, born in about 1992. He turned his buttocks toward you, kicked if you tried to catch him, and ran when you got near him. When we rounded up our horses, Father bridled them while we stopped them from running away.

Father needed to guard our autumn pasture with other local men one day in the summer pasture, and decided to ride Rta nag ldang. We ran after him for hours before finally catching him. Father was upset, threw stones at him, and wrapped a rope around his mouth.

Rta rgan nag ldang once led my family's horses to our neighbors' grassland in the winter pasture. The neighbors said nothing and drove the horses back to my family's grassland, embarrassing my parents. They scolded Rta rgan nag ldang and sometimes tied him and Rkyang rdang ma near the yak enclosure for several days.

Rta nag ldang was the only horse we rode when I was in primary school. When we were in the autumn pasture, most local students went home or to school by horse, or they walked. Mother and I rode Rta nag ldang to school and back home (2020).

FIG 40. Rgye'u nag ldang 'Three-year-old Horse' was disobedient. In 2021, one of our neighbors, who was skilled at taming horses, helped Father ride Rgye'u nag ldang for the first time. Father wanted to check on our yaks in the summer pasture, so he hobbled him before we saddled him. Next, Father removed the hobble while I held the lead rope. The horse tried to run here and there and bucked. Around thirty minutes later, he calmed down, and Father rode him to the summer pasture (2020).

FIG 41. Rgod ma rkyang ldang ma 'Brown Mare' was the most badly behaved mare I ever encountered! I rode her for the first and last time when she was four. We were moving from our autumn to winter pasture, and Father told me to ride her. He helped me hold the reins, but when I tried to mount her, she bucked and tried to run. Father then led her near a boulder, which I climbed and, from there, mounted her. Father pulled her back with the lead rope when she tried running again. Locals were busy driving their livestock. Mother and 'Brug kho were hurriedly driving our yaks. Meanwhile, Father and I struggled with Rgod ma rkyang ldang ma. Father held the lead rope until we caught up with our yaks. Rgod ma rkyang ldang ma jumped and tried to run whenever I let go of one of the reins. I had to concentrate. She would suddenly jump, and I worried I would fall off. It was a tiresome day. After that, none of my family members rode Rgod ma rkyang ldang ma (2019).

FIG 42. My parents gave Rkyang ldang to Klu mo when she married and moved to her husband's home. Rkyang ldang is big and tall, like a camel, and is a *'gyo ma* 'can go long distances without tiring'. Klu mo said they once lost him in the summer pasture. Later, A pha lhu kho found Rkyang ldang in the neighboring community's winter pasture. He was thin and weak and had scars on his legs and back. It was obvious somebody had ridden Rkyang ldang for a long time and mistreated him. Klu mo and A pha lhu kho cared for him, but he could no longer go long distances without resting. Later, Klu mo and A pha lhu kho *tshe thar btngs ba* 'promised not to kill or sell' him (2020).

FIG 43. Khya gzhis ma. This ewe was one of Klu mo's family's sheep. When I asked Klu mo why this ewe wore a coat, she explained winter was very cold, and she was losing wool from her back (2021).

FIG 44. This ewe had rolled down the mountain and couldn't stand, so Klu mo and A pha lhu kho tended her several times daily, dug a hole near the yak enclosure, and left a small wall where she could put her belly. Her hind legs were in the back hole, and her forelegs were in the front hole. Klu mo said this eased numbness in her legs. They watered her several times a day and provided straw. Klu mo commented it was sad to see livestock suffer (2021).

FIG 45. Klu mo's family had ten weak lambs and ewes and fed them barley and straw in the mornings and evenings in the winter of 2021. Other sheep were only fed straw in the morning. It was the first time they had fed their livestock, especially sheep, with barley and straw. It was the worst year they could remember, with livestock suffering from a lack of grass, so they bought hundreds of straw bales (2021).

FIG 46. A lamb slept on its mother's back. Klu mo said the lamb did this often, so the ewe lost wool on her back (2021).

FIG 47. Ewe with a broken leg. Klu mo explained that she noticed that this ewe was limping when she was driving sheep home from the mountain. Once she got home, she and A pha lhu kho put a splint on the broken section, wrapped it with string, and covered the break with a cloth. Klu mo later said the ewe was gradually improving and limping less (2021).

FIG 48. A ewe (right) gave birth to twins. A pha lhu kho and Klu mo fed the ewe barley and hay. Klu mo said the twin lambs often fled when she got near, but they were not afraid when she gave them barley (2020).

DEER

Seeing a deer in my home community was rare when I was a child. It was a special moment that we treasured as a family. One autumn afternoon, Mother spotted three deer running from the forested mountain near our home, and she immediately called us. We all came to witness this magical sight. As we watched the deer in surprise, we couldn't help but feel a sense of awe and wonder at the beauty of these majestic creatures.

As time passed, the deer population in our community began to increase, and we started seeing more of them around our home. In 2014, particularly in the winter and spring pastures, deer come to our fenced grassland. At times, as many as fifty deer came to our grassland at night, drank from a nearby creek, and grazed

all night. We drove them away early in the morning, but they would return within the next few days.

As the years passed, the deer population continued growing. We started seeing herds of deer in our fenced grassland and the mountains. Father and I went to the mountains to drive them away, while Mother, 'Brug kho, and Dom prug went to the fenced grassland to do the same. However, the deer became increasingly accustomed to our presence, and lost fear of people over time.

Eventually, they started grazing in our grassland when we were around, running for a while when we got near and then looking back to see if we were following.

FIG 49. While Father was checking on our yaks one night after dinner he noticed many deer in our fenced grassland and went to drive them away. Mother and I joined him. My parents and I went separately. I had a solar-panel-charged flashlight with weak light, so I couldn't see very far, so I had to listen to gauge in what direction the deer were running and go in that direction. The deer were tricky. When I got near, they ran in the opposite direction. When I again got near them, they ran behind me. I saw my parents' flashlights and realized the deer were running here and there. It was not until about one AM that we finally got the deer out of our fenced grassland. My parents then considered getting a dog. Father said, "The deer would not dare bully us if we had a dog!" (2021).

FIG 50. Locals earned income from collecting and selling deer antlers. Deer cast their antlers, and in spring, men from the area ventured into the mountains while herding, hoping to find antlers. In around 2013, antlers sold for about 200 RMB per kilogram. On one occasion, Father searched for our family's horses in our autumn pasture and stumbled upon a pair of deer antlers that he eventually sold to a Muslim merchant for 900 RMB (2021).

FIG 51 Klu mo said her family's watchdog was adept at frightening deer away from their grassland. Klu mo got up around five every morning to check if deer were in their family's grassland and took the watchdog with her. It took a long time, when the deer were at the mountaintop, so she sicced the dog onto them and waited until the dog returned after frightening the deer away. Today deer don't run when people get near them, even on motorcycles. When Klu mo talked about deer and her family's watchdog, my parents admired her, and Mother would recall now my family's watchdog had also frightened deer away (2021).

DOM PHRUG: OUR FAMILY WATCHDOG

My family had several watchdogs, but Dom phrug was the only one who stayed until he died. My parents never tried to give him away because he was a good dog. We had another dog that left in 2014 and never returned.

Dom phrug was strong, and energetic. When he was young, he frightened deer away from our grassland.

Dom phrug liked to play with 'Brug kho, 'Phag log, and especially me. We often played with him when he was a puppy. 'Brug kho and I took him with us when we herded yaks and taught him to chase us as we ran about. 'Brug kho and I would put a sleeve in Dom phrug's mouth and pull, when we were sitting. Dom phrug would pull back.

Almost every morning after breakfast, 'Brug kho and I played with Dom phrug. Neighbor children liked to visit and play with our dog. My parents scolded us and told us to stop playing with him. Mother warned she would no longer sew my torn sleeves, because she had to mend them almost daily.

When, after several months, 'Brug kho and I came home from school, Dom phrug came, wagged his tail, and sniffed us after we got off the motorcycle. We patted him, and he continued wagging his tail while trotting with us until we got to our house. We gave him something to eat after we had put our belongings inside. Dom phrug was happy with our return.

Sometimes Dom phrug liked to pretend he was strong and brave. Once, when deer were in my family's fenced grassland in the winter pasture, I ran at them. Dom phrug also ran at the deer. They were frightened and ran away. However, when the deer slowed, Dom phrug dared not go near them. He barked and looked back to see if I was coming.

Local elders often said *khyi tshe lo dgu* 'a dog's lifespan is nine', but Dom phrug stayed with my family for fifteen years. We were all fond of him. When I was a child, I thought he was just a dog, but as I got older, he was more than a watchdog - he was almost a family member. I have so many memories of Dom phrug. The most precious thing he gave my family was a sense of security

at night especially, in remote places, where the nights were more than just nights.

FIG 52. Dom phrug, my family's watchdog (2015).

FIG 53. Father and I stayed overnight here while moving our yaks from winter pasture to spring pasture. Father stayed here many times over the years and explained that it was a safe place for yaks because it is on a steep rocky mountain that wolves avoided, and the yaks would not escape from in the middle of the night (2019).

FIG 54. At six in the morning, Father and I drove our yaks from the rocky mountain where we had spent the night to the mountain in the foreground. We returned to collect our gear, which we packed on the pack yak. I extinguished the fire while Father saddled two horses (2019).

FIG 55. Father and I boil tea on a stone hearth after unpacking the pack yak while moving from the winter pasture to the spring pasture (2019).

FORAGING

MUSHROOMS

Collecting mushrooms was entertaining when I was a child. I and local peers competed to see who could get the most. Some mushrooms were as big as bowls and had small worms inside, but we still liked to collect them. After showing these large mushrooms to each other, we threw them away. Later, locals collected mushrooms and sold them to Chinese who operated restaurants and shops in the Township Town.

As a child, I hated going to summer pasture because I had to herd disobedient calves and collect yak dung. It was mundane and grueling. Once, when Grandmother visited, I asked her to get permission from my parents to go with her to collect mushrooms and make some money the next summer. They agreed, but my dream never materialized. Later, I heard Grandmother was selling mushrooms with a neighbor woman her age near the local highway where many tourists passed on the way to Mtsho sngon po.

Grandmother and her friend collected mushrooms near

the local asphalt road. They had two small plastic bags of mushrooms and were sitting and chatting when a man in a black car stopped and asked how much for the two bags of mushrooms.

Grandmother said, "I know how to say 'ten RMB' in the Qinghai Chinese dialect, but I dared not say it because I thought it was too expensive, so I asked my friend, 'How do you say nine in Chinese?'"

She answered, "I have no idea."

They both stared innocently at the man, who then started to leave. Grandmother and her friend followed. When he asked again how much, they remained silent. At a loss, the man had no idea what to do and drove away.

Later, when she told this story, we asked, "Why didn't you say ten, or one hundred, or one thousand!" which made everyone laugh.

Her children later asked her not to collect mushrooms because others would gossip that they didn't give her any money, forcing her to collect and sell mushrooms.

As a child, we often ate *mo nyog* 'sliced fresh mushrooms cooked with butter, roasted barley flour, and dried cheese'. Mushrooms were available only in summer, so we were eager to collect and cook them during that season. There were many things to eat as time passed, so we stopped preparing *mo nyog*. However, Grandmother often made *mo nyog* when I visited her in summer. The number of mushrooms decreased in 2020-2022 because, according to elders, the grasslands were deteriorating, so we only collected mushrooms to eat.

In 2019, Mother collected and cleaned the mushrooms and strung them together. Father made metal hooks, fastened them to the stove chimney pipe, and hung the strung mushrooms.

Mother got up early to collect mushrooms while I did morning house chores until she returned. Sometimes, there were many mushrooms to collect, so she returned late. Father, 'Brug kho, and I ate breakfast before she returned. Later, Mother cleaned the fresh mushrooms, put them on strings, and put half-dried mushrooms in a roof shelter where they would dry in the wind and warm temperatures. Father and A pha lhu kho sold the

dried mushrooms to a Chinese man that winter for around 3,000 RMB. Mother was happy about that. We teased her, calling her "Rich Woman." She later used this money to buy things for the family.

FIG 56. I collected these mushrooms with a neighbor girl (2019).

GO THOG 'CUMIN' SEED

My family and neighbors added *go thog* to blood sausage when I was a child. I don't remember exactly when, but later we stopped doing this. In 2019, Father and I went to the county town and noticed a big bag of cumin seeds in a grocery shop selling for eighty RMB per kilogram. We didn't buy any, but we learned cumin seeds were expensive. Later that autumn, many people collected cumin seeds in my family's fenced spring pasture. One night a doctor on the A mdo TV channel explained that cumin seeds were good for your health. Afterward, Mother collected cumin seeds and added them to noodles, meat, and dumplings.

NETTLES

One of Father's relatives recommended nettles for lowering high blood pressure. Father said that it helped him a lot. Afterward, my family often collected nettles. My parents said that the fifth day of the fifth month is the best day to collect nettles because it is Sangs rgyas sman bla'i dus chen 'Medicine Buddha Day'. Water and herbs are provided by the Medicine Buddha that day. Mother put collected nettles on a clean cloth, dried them in the sun, and often added some to tea and soups because she said they were good for general health.

LIVESTOCK TREATMENT

PARASITES

As well as broken limbs, problems for livestock include ticks, grubs, and other parasites. My family members tried various treatments using methods passed down for generations and new drugs. Spring was busy because yaks had many grubs and ticks, especially ticks. In 2022, my family tried a drug powder and a liquid drug applied to the ticks, and they were somewhat effective. However, Father announced the yaks still had many ticks. A pha lhu kho told Father about some effective tablets to get rid of ticks, so Father asked him to buy some. Later, Father and 'Brug kho caught a yak, 'Brug kho pulled the rope around the yak's neck, while Father held the yak's head and opened the yak's mouth, I then poured water and tablets into the yak's mouth. This drug was very effective.

Father commented, "When I was young, we scattered ash on the ticks because there were no drugs. It was efficacious somehow."

YAK EYE TREATMENT

We also treat yak eye problems. I don't know how and where my parents learned such eye-treatment skills, but they were effective. When yak eyes teared and discharged, or the yaks could not see very well and had white spots on their eyeballs, my parents put a powdered Tetracycline tablet into their eyes for four to seven days. Serious cases might have required ten days of treatment.

CHAGS 'JOG PA 'HEALING FRACTURED LIMBS'

When my family herded sheep, treating broken bones was common. Yaks do not often have broken bones. However, Klu mo's family herded sheep, so they often had to deal with this problem. Treatment included preparing splints from wooden chopsticks or shrub stems and finding two pieces of cloth (not plastic) to wrap around the splints to hold them in place. Finally, the cloth was wrapped with woolen or yak hair strings. Typical recovery required about a month.

My parents used the *thal thum* 'heal the fractured bones with ash' method if the animal's shoulder blade was fractured. Water and ash were mixed and put on the fractured part. The animal's hair was pulled away from both sides of the fractured area and sewn together to cover the fractured area and to keep the ash paste on the fracture. Father said ash helped the fracture recover quickly and prevented infection, especially during warm weather.

RELIGIOUS RITUALS[17]

Every year my family invites a monk or mantrika to chant *Lha mo'i bskang ba 'Dpal ldan lha mo Scripture'* and offer incense to Dpal ldan lha mo, my family's female deity. It was my family's busiest day. I herded yaks that day as usual. Father offered incense and discarded *gtor ma* 'barley-flour figures',[18] while Mother cooked and offered food to the monk or the mantrika who chanted.

One day Father asked A khu rgyal mtshan to chant for my family. He agreed and asked Father to pick him up with our family car in the Township Town three days later. He was busy because many people asked him to chant for their families, so Father asked him in advance. Although A khu rgyal mtshan was no longer a monk, many locals wanted him to conduct family religious rituals

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[17] Religious rituals are part of my family's daily life. Mother would have explained her religious beliefs in this way: "Except for daily religious rituals such as chanting and offering incenses, I also pray to local *bla ma* and go on pilgrimages to local monasteries if I have the chance." Bshad sgrub dar rgyas gling (Shinaihai Monastery, Garila Monastery) 'to Preach the Prosperity of the Monastery' was located in the northwest of Gonghe County, 193 kilometers from Chab cha (Qiabuqia) Township, and seven kilometers south of Sprel nag zhing Township, on the northwest shore of Mtsho sngon po. It was associated with D+hiH tsha (Zhizha) Monastery, Dpa' lung (Hualong) County. In the 1930s, the head of Theb rgya (Tiebuja) Monastery, Ra ba dpal mkhar (Lawa Huangke), had a conflict with A mchog a b+ha (Aque Awa), a monk who led some monks from Theb rgya Monastery in 1941. They built Kar la (Garila) Monastery with the support of a hundred households in Chos rtsig (Quzou) nine kilometers west of Sprel nag zhing Township. A mchog a b+ha became the monastery head (Nian and Bai 1993:214). Jo skor dgon (Jiaoshikesi), Theg chen chos 'khor gling 'Teaching Mahayana Dharma Monastery' was located ninety-three kilometers northwest of Chab cha (Chabucha) and thirty kilometers south of Heimahe Township. It was founded in 1857. Previously, the second monk of Anjang Monastery in present-day Gcan tsha (Jianzha) County lived there for a time. The nomadic missionary and medical practice of the Jo skor (Jiaoshike) Tribe led to building the Jo skor dgon pa (Jiaoshikesi) Tent Monastery. It was reestablished in 1873 on the current site with adobe (Nian and Bai 1993:215).

[18] Figures made from barley-flour and butter used in Tibetan Buddhist rituals and offerings that may be dyed different colors.

because they believed he was trustworthy and dependable. Some said his chanting was efficacious. My parents trusted and liked him. A khu rgyal mtshan's wife was a kind, friendly woman and one of Father's relatives. She worked as a street cleaner in the township. After Father brought A khu rgyal mtshan to our home, he spent the night with my family because we were in the winter pasture, and it was inconvenient to take him back to his home.

Early the next morning, Mother got up earlier than usual - around five - and prepared breakfast. A new and busy day began. The house was warm when everyone was up, and tea awaited us.

RI BSANG 'OFFERING INCENSE ON THE MOUNTAINS'

My family offered incense in the mountains during local religious rituals and Lo sar. According to the Tibetan calendar, a local festival was held on the fifth day of the seventh month. On this day, most local men went to the top of Mount Rgyal sras and offered incense, followed by a horserace at the foot of the mountain where women and children were in the audience.

During Lo sar, 'Brug kho went to local Mount Rgya se, where locals often offered incense. Offering incense during Lo sar at different mountains, including Mount Nor bu g.yu rgyal, was popular among young local men, who mentioned offering incense on this and that holy mountain. Nobody said it was a bad thing. Instead, they said it was a new change.

My parents and elder relatives commented that once you offered incense in the mountains for several years, you must continue from generation to generation, or the mountain deity would punish the family. Thus, 'Brug kho and Father offered incense only on Rgyal sras and Nor bu g.yu rgyal. Father and Brother went to my family's grassland mountains, Rnga rgan and Chu lam, on the fifteenth day of the first month to offer incense because Lo sar was ending. It was time to offer the food we had placed in front of Buddhist images during Lo sar to the mountain deities. Father and 'Brug kho burned the food on the stone *bsang khri* 'altar'.

SKAR MA A BRTAN RGYAL POR BCOL PA 'BESEECHING THE NORTH STAR TO PROTECT LIVESTOCK'.[19]

My family commonly lost livestock, when the livestock stayed in the mountains at night. When this happened, my parents offered incense, chanted *mA rI ts+ye*,[20] and stuck a sewing needle into a wall when we lived in houses or stuck a needle into the tent when we lived in tents. Once, when my family was in the summer pasture, a neighbor informed us that our mare was giving birth on the mountain. My family members were busy and couldn't bring them home that day, so Mother beseeched the North Star to protect the mare and the colt from predators.

While this always worked for my family, there were different stories. For example, locals said a man beseeched the North Start to protect his family's yaks on the mountain one night. Unfortunately, one yak was killed by wolves that night. He was very disappointed and said that the North Star was useless. Locals commented that maybe he had made a mistake while praying because it was impossible for the North Star not to protect his yaks.

[19] For more, see Larsen (2008): "To this day, nomads in northern Tibet will ask the North Star - the "Stable Star of the North" - to protect a wayward animal for the night in the expectation that the star will aid in the animal's return in the morning." An alternative name my parents and other locals used was Byang skar ma a bthang rgyal po. "Rkang steng bu" is the literary term for North Star. (https://tinyurl.com/2p8u9bxh, 11 November 2022).

[20] The name of the mantra of Lha mo 'od zer can ma. The full name of the mantra we chanted was *oM mA ri ts+ye+e maM swA hA* (, 7 November 2022). My parents did not know the meaning of the mantra, nor did they know that it was the mantra of Lha mo 'od zer can ma. They learned it from elders and from listening to others chant. They never doubted chanting *mA rI ts+ye* protected our livestock.

On the first day of the first month, my family *srung kha gso pa* 'renews cloth or yak hair string tied on a sacred yak's mane'. My parents prepared various materials to do this. After breakfast, Mother gave Father wool and orange yarn to make *srung rtags*, 'string made of wool and orange yarn' and prepared a scoop of fresh water and another scoop of a mixture of water and milk, an egg-sized piece of butter, and a metal scoop of smoldering dried juniper tree leaves. My parents, brother, and I went to the yak enclosures and caught the scared yaks of our family deities. After catching one yak, Father or Mother circled burning juniper leaves around the yak to remove evil. Next, Father tied *srung rtags* in the yak's mane and smeared butter on the yak's horns (if the yak had horns), ears, hooves, forehead, tail, and mane. Finally, he poured ~~the~~ milky water from the yak's tail to the head and the fresh water from the head to the tail, while reciting:

དགའ་བ་ཁར་བསྐུས་ནི།
དགའ་དགའ་ར་སྐྱིད་སྐྱིད་ལ་འདུག་དགོ།
སུག་བཞིའི་ཁར་བསྐུས་ནི།
ཕྱོགས་བཞིའི་དྲག་ནོན་དགོ།
ཇ་མར་བསྐུས་ནི།
ཕྱུག་ཁྲ་ཁྲའི་ཇ་ཐག་རིང་དགོ།
[1] dga' ba khar bskus ni
[2] dga' dga' ra skyid skyid la 'dug dgo
[3] sug bzhi'i khar bskus ni
[4] phyogs bzhi'i dgra non dgo
[5] rnga mar bskus ni
[6] phyug khra khra'i rnga thag ring dgo

[1] Smear butter on the mouth
[2] Hope it makes us always happy
[3] Smear butter on the four hooves
[4] Hope it protects the family from evil
[5] Smear butter on the tail
[6] Hope it makes the yak strong

My family's sacred yaks were disobedient and energetic, requiring an hour of vigorous activity during *srung kha gso pa*.

LHA MO'I BSANG BA

FIG 57. A khu rgyal mtshan chants *Lha mo'i bskang ba* for my family (2022).

FIG 58. *Sa dpar/tsha tsha* 'clay figurines'. A khu rgyal mtshan said he made Tara images with red soil for the families where he chanted. If a family had a '*bum khang* 'room filled with Buddhist images', the Tara images were put there. If the family did not have a '*bum khang*, A khu rgyal mtshan asked the family to put the images in a river to protect the family from diseases and evils. A khu rgyal mtshan took a small plastic bag of red soil; small *tsha tsha* 'clay figurines'; a drum; scripture volumes; small copper bowls; a wooden bowl, chopsticks, and a small knife wherever he went. His bags were heavy. One of my cousins said once when he rode his motorcycle to pick up A khu rgyal mtshan to chant scriptures at his home, the motorcycle stopped in the middle of a big river when crossing because the bags were heavy. Many rocks underwater made walking, pushing, and pulling the motorcycle difficult. A khu rgyal mtshan pushed the motorcycle while my cousin pulled it across the river. They both got wet (2022).

FIG 59. *Chu dpar* 'water images'. After A khu rgyal mtshan finished chanting, Father asked him to divine if we should do other religious rituals to protect my family from misfortune. A khu rgyal mtshan divined with his prayer beads and said, "Everything is good, but it would be better if you could make some water images," indicating that we needed to pat *tsha kong* '*tsha tsha* mold' in the water until we had completed the number we wanted to make. For example, we had promised to make 5,000 *chu dpar* that day, which was how many times we repeated this action.

Several days later, my parents and I did *chu dpar*. We each wished to make 5,000. It wasn't convenient for Mother to use her hands to make this many. They became painful and swollen if she overused them, so Father and I helped her (2022).

FIG 60. *Tsha kong 'tsha tsha* mold.' My paternal grandfather acquired the *tsha kong* from an acquaintance (2022).

FIG 61. *Sgo bsang* 'home incense offering' was central to my family's daily life. We made it in the morning before breakfast and in the evening before dinner. Women and men offered it, not children. Mother often offered *sgo bsang*. Smoldering yak dung was placed in a metal bowl hung from above by chains on four sides. A spoon of roasted barley was added. Tea was dribbled onto the mashed roasted barley, and *ja phud* 'tea offering for deities' was flung into the sky three times.

A neighbor once scolded his nineteen-year-old son for first flinging tea in various directions, instead of offering it to the eastern sky. He added, "You must fling the tea in the four cardinal and intermediate directions because each direction has a deity protecting us" (2020).

FIG 62. Every morning and evening, my family offered *tsha gsur* 'roasted and mashed barley grain mixed with honey and sugar' near the yak enclosure and sometimes in the enclosure on a small adobe altar. If an ill yak died, Mother or Father made a big flat adobe altar in the center of the enclosure and offered a large *tsha gsur*, so the smoldering *tsha gsur's* odor would save dead animal spirits from starvation. Smoldering *tsha gsur* also purifies the atmosphere of the area where it burns (2021).

MCHOD PA MCHOD ME

FIG 63. *Mchod me* 'butter lamps' are integral to my family's daily religious rituals. My paternal grandfather enjoyed helping our family by sewing torn clothes, fixing broken tools, and making butter lamp wicks. Mother once asked me to collect dry grass to make butter lamp wicks. I collected some, but Mother said what I had collected was unsuitable. Later I accompanied her as she collected dry grass stalks for butter lamp wicks. After we got home, Mother made the wicks before dinner. We would eat meat for dinner. Butter lamps and meat must be kept separate. Mother told me a holy monk once visited my family to chant and said the meat was the only thing that could pollute butter lamps. He added that if a butter lamp touched meat, it was best not to use it because it would be ineffective, i.e., such a butter lamp in front of Buddhist

images would not protect a family or others who wanted to avoid misfortune.

Mother said it was auspicious when burnt wicks were large and flat.

Recently, many families have used electronic butter lamps. While convenient and portable, Mother preferred genuine butter lamps, which we lit every morning and evening (2019).

FIG 64. *Mchod pa bshams pa* translated as 'offering water in small copper bowls in front of Buddhist images' and *mchod pa phyags pa* as 'empty small copper bowls'. The local term for the bowl is *ting phor*. Every morning before breakfast, my family offered fresh water in seven small copper bowls in front of my family's Buddhist images. We emptied and cleaned the *ting pho*w ith a towel before dinner, and poured water into a scoop and flung it onto the roof of the rooms. Starting and ending a day with these two rituals in winter and spring pastures was essential. But when we were in the summer and autumn pastures, my family did not offer water in small copper bowls in front of Buddhist images because hanging deity images in the tents was inconvenient.

My paternal aunt lived in the County Town and

complained that emptying the bowls of water offerings was inconvenient, especially compared to flinging water onto a clean place like a roof at her rural home. Aunt said she had no choice, so she poured the water into the sink in town even though the sink was not very clean (2019).

HOME CHORES

ONG SPUNGS

Collecting yak dung was an essential daily chore for my family, and a part of our morning routine we rarely skipped. Our daily cooking, heating, and offering incense required burning yak dung, making it an indispensable fuel source. However, if my family was very busy, Mother or I collected yak dung in the afternoon, which was considered unusual and could have invited rumors. When Mother, Grandmother, and Aunt were young, a housewife who collected yak dung in the afternoon ran the risk of being labeled a *rul ma* 'lazy woman.' In our community, people valued hard work and diligence, so being labeled a *'rul ma'* was to be avoided at all costs. However, after electricity came to our home area, things changed, and we no longer relied on yak dung as our primary fuel source. Cooking and heating are now possible without burning

fuels like yak dung, making life more convenient.

The season determined how Mother and I collected yak dung. For instance, during the summer months, we pasted yak dung on the ground, which we called *kho shog* 'yak dung that is stretched thin and dries in one and a half to two days.' After several days of drying, we collected and dumped it in one place, making a mound. The mixture of yak dung and sheep dung was considered the best fuel for summer, and we made sure to collect enough to last us through the season.

Collecting yak dung was an essential part of our daily routine and a crucial source of household fuel. While this has become less prevalent, it still has a special place in our daily routine. It continues to be a vital aspect of our cultural heritage.

FIG 65. *Ong spungs* 'dried yak dung mound' where yak and sheep dung were stored. The size of *ong spungs* and how neatly it was constructed indicated a woman's ability. For example, if *ong spungs* were small and disordered, negative rumors spread about the family and the housewife, facilitated by locals adept at verbal sparring.

Mother and Klu mo cared a lot about the size of their *ong spungs*. Klu mo said, "I am uncomfortable if my *ong spungs* are untidy and small."

Mother and I made the *ong spungs* together in the spring pasture. I collected yak dung and put it near the mound of dried yak dung. Mother pasted wet yak dung on the mound of dried yak dung. After drying for several days, Mother and I pasted another layer on the mound to protect it from wind and rain while we were in the winter and autumn pastures (2020).

FIG 66. Spring days were longer and warmer, so Mother and I made *lci leb* 'round yak dung' that dried relatively quickly. It was good fuel on cold days because it burned longer, and the stove stayed hot longer. Mother and neighbor women said *lci leb* was also good fuel when making fried bread. Mother and Klu mo also used *lci leb* for dried yak dung mound frames.[21]

In 2021, a community leader asked each family to provide one hundred *lci leb* to make decorated *ong spungs* attract tourists, but no family did so. I have no evidence that decorated *ong spungs* had commercial value. Still, *ong spungs* decorated with colorful paintings of the Eight Auspicious Symbols attracted many locals who posted videos and photos on Kwai and WeChat. Some local families were subsequently inspired and made similarly decorated *ong spungs,* also posting images on their social platforms (2022).

[21] *Lci leb* were used to make the sides of an enclosure approximately one meter high, two meters wide, and five meters long. It was filled with dry yak and sheep dung, also known as *ong spungs*.

FIG 67. When I was a child, water for my family was fetched either by women who carried plastic bottles on their backs or by yaks. Fetching water was the women's main duty. In the autumn pasture, my family fetched water using yaks. Mother, Klu mo, and neighbor women sometimes went to the river together. I enjoyed going with them and listening to their conversations about men, women, lovers, and their songs. Carrying heavy containers on their backs and walking long distances was difficult, but they enjoyed talking and listening and often laughed. More recently, families, including mine, fetch water using motorcycles. In 2022, Klu mo fetched water on her back in the summer pasture. My family dug a well in the winter pasture, and Mother and I no longer fetched water from a creek (2020).

FIG 68. *Yos brngo pa/nas brngo ba* 'roasting barley'. Except when we were in the winter pasture, my family bought *rtsam pa* from township shops. My family made *rtsam pa* in the winter pasture because our *lag bskor* 'stone hand mill' was there. We didn't move it to other pastures because its size and weight made that inconvenient. When I was a child, neighbors would come to my home to make *rtsam pa*. More recently, many, including my family, buy *rtsam pa* from shops and no longer make their own. Mother recommended moistening the barley before roasting it to make it easier to grind. She put half of a small basin of *yos sa* 'soil' into a pot, heated it, added a small plate of moistened barley to the pot, and agitated the barley until it popped, put the popped kernels into a sieve, sifted out the soil, put the popped kernels into a sack, and repeated this process. When it was time to grind the roasted barley, Mother put a cloth on the floor, put the stone hand mill on top, and ground it (2021).

FIG 69. The hand mill Mother used to grind roasted barley (2021).

SEPARATING MILK

My family churned milk every summer day when I was a child. Later, after we stopped going to the summer pasture, we didn't churn milk until the yaks moved to the spring pasture. When my family was in the summer pasture, one of Mother's most important duties was making at least one container of butter for self-consumption to last until the next summer. After a woman made one or more containers of butter, she stopped milking or milked less. When our neighbors or my family made a container of butter, they shared *mar lo* 'butter balls' with neighbor children, who gave the butter balls to their mother, who added them to *rtsam pa* or rice. For example, if a neighboring family had three children, my family would give our neighbor three butter balls. We would make *nyog* 'boiled wheat flour' eaten with butter and sugar and invite the neighbor to come and eat *nyog* together. The neighbor later did the same. Grandmother said when she was young, she would make seven to eight sacks of butter, put them together near the *do* 'place sacks and saddle are put in the upper part of the tent,' and cover them with *phya ra* 'yak-hair cloth'. Neighbors praised her as hard-working, which made her proud of

herself. Making big sacks of butter was a fundamental way to evaluate a woman's quality. Few people care about this today.

FIG 70. My family's milk separator (2021).

MAKING CHEESE

FIG 71. Making cheese. We heated buttermilk, cooled it, and poured it into a filter bag hung from a triangle of stakes to drain the liquid. Once, some bags of my family's moist cheese were about to spoil when it rained for around ten days in the summer pasture. Father then took them to the spring pasture and asked Aunt to dry them. (2019).

VISITING

Visiting was an important part of my family's daily life. Father and Brother enjoyed visiting neighbors and cousins during their leisure time. Mother was busy with house chores and didn't visit much, but she was hospitable and talkative. Some neighbors liked to visit my family when they were not busy because they enjoyed chatting with Mother.

One morning in the winter pasture at around seven AM, I noticed a car moving toward my home while I was collecting yak dung. Father and Brother were still in bed, and Mother was boiling tea. I wondered who it was on such a cold morning and worried something bad had happened. Mother came out of our house, greeted the guest, and escorted him inside. I hurriedly finished collecting yak dung and went home. As I approached our house, I

saw Mother offering incense and asked her about the visitor and why he had come. Mother explained a neighbor from the spring pasture was collecting tamarisk to burn for a religious ritual in the mountains. Relieved, I entered the house and greeted him.

After breakfast, my parents and the guest chatted while Brother and I did morning chores. When we finished, we joined them and listened. Our talkative neighbor was a very good storyteller, Mother was very talkative, and Father asked anything whenever he wanted. The house was full of smoke, talk, and laughter as Mother prepared, offered tea, and chatted. Our guest described his experiences visiting his friend's wife's home.

At noon, Brother and I drove our yaks to the mountains while my parents and our visitor continued chatting and laughing.

When I was a child, a friend and I were neighbors in the winter pasture. After I came home from school, she would return from herding and ask my parents for permission for me to spend the night at her house. My parents would agree.

Several days later, I would go to her home in the afternoon and ask her parents for permission for her to sleep at my home. Sometimes, she asked other neighbor girls to visit, and we would play various games. Her parents were among the most generous and kind people I have ever met. It was a nice warm two-room adobe house. Her parents slept in the main room, where the family ate and cooked. The other room was for storage. We added dried yak dung to the stove to heat the room and boiled tea in the main room until we went to bed in the storage room. Her parents would talk and laugh with us until we went to bed. Sometimes when the moon was full, we slept outside near the sheep enclosure for fun.

My friend eventually married and moved to her husband's home. In 2022, she had two adorable sons. We didn't visit each other as in the past. I waited hopefully for her visit during Lo sar.

FIG 72. Father and I visited a neighboring family on the spring pasture and found the household head and his friend making sheepskin robes. Father helped them cut the cloth, and then they chatted over tea. Meanwhile, I chatted with the housewife and watched TV with their daughter (2019).

FIG 73. A ce 'brug mo's told her daughter to churn, believing girls should know how to do such chores. Meanwhile, Ace 'brug mo tidies G.yang 'dzin's hair tidy. G.yang 'dzin wears her mother's hat to protect her face from the sun (2019).

FIG 74. A ce 'brug mo, our spring pasture neighbor, dries cheese on plastic cloth (2019).

CONCLUSION

The sale of livestock in 2022 marked a significant turning point for my family and our community. For generations, herding yaks has been the foundation of our traditional way of life, providing us with food, clothing, and income. However, with changing times and new policies to protect the grasslands, our way of life faces challenges, and the future of herding in our community is uncertain.

The decision to sell our yaks was not easy, but necessary for survival. With less grass in our home area, we had to find new ways to sustain ourselves and our livelihoods. However, the sale of yaks represents more than a financial transaction. It symbolizes our community's changing landscape and the challenges we face in adapting to new ways of life. With the government's policy of protecting the grasslands, there are strict regulations on how many animals we can herd and where we can graze them. While this policy is essential to preserve the fragile ecosystem, it also restricts our ability to maintain our traditional way of life.

Despite these challenges, my family and others in our community remain resilient. We are exploring new ways to adapt, such as diversifying our income streams and embracing sustainable herding practices. While the future of herding in our community is uncertain, we are committed to preserving our traditions and passing them down to future generations, so they can continue to live harmoniously with the land and the animals that sustain us.

PART TWO
'BRUG LHA RGYAL - TIBETAN DANCER

I interviewed 'Brug lha rgyal through WeChat during the winter holiday of 2018-2019 to preserve an account of his life - particularly his experiences with dance.

HERDING EXPERIENCES BEFORE ATTENDING SCHOOL

Before attending school, I herded yaks with Klu mo tshe ring on the mountains and herded calves near our home. We often played to escape the monotony of herding. Sometimes we made a round house with stones and pretended to be the families we imagined living there. We also herded calves with neighboring children, and after driving the calves some distance from our homes, we played together, imitating yaks and butting each other.

Cousin Klu 'bum rgyal (b. 1980) and I went to herd yaks near Mtsho sngon po. The land had not been divided among families, so we grazed our livestock wherever we wanted. Cousin Klu 'bum rgyal asked me to provoke Rin chen (b. 1986) because he didn't like him. I didn't understand, but I didn't ask. First, I said bad things, such as "*klo'u rgan, rkaun tus*" 'You are stupid, you are a thief'."

Rin chen ignored me, so I threw stones at him. He finally got angry, scolded me, and approached me. Cousin and Rin chen then fought.

One summer day, as Cousin and I herded yaks on the mountains, he told me to mount a yak. Yaks look gentle grazing on the grassland, but they easily become wild and may buck wildly when mounted. My yak ran from the others and then turned back, frightening the other yaks.

I firmly gripped the yak's hair but soon fell to the ground as if in a dream. When I regained consciousness, Cousin asked me how I felt. When he saw me crying, he scolded, "A real man never cries!"

I quietly wiped my tears away as Cousin said, "Don't tell anybody what happened today, OK? Otherwise, they won't let us herd together."

I agreed.

Locals began preparing to move to our autumn pasture when summer was over. Herding yaks was not easy when I was six years old. There wasn't much grass, and the weather was getting cold.

One rainy, windy day, Mother and I drove our yaks up a mountainside and found a small place to avoid the cold weather under our plastic raincoats. I slept as Mother chanted. While I was enjoying my nap, Mother roused me and said, "Our yaks have gone over the mountain. You're faster than me, so go and stop them from running. I'll follow."

I jumped up and rushed up the mountain. I was less worried when I saw some yaks slowly moving away. I shouted, "*Dgo! Dgo! Dgo!* 'Stop! Stop! Stop!'" and chased them, believing they would hear me and stop running. I finally got in front and stopped them. I couldn't speak for several days, but my condition slowly improved. Mother says she has never forgotten the sound of me shouting to the yaks to stop them from running.

Another time, Sgrol ma yag and I stole a package of Father's cigarettes before we drove the sheep out to graze. We tried to smoke them all while herding. Some cigarettes were left when it was time to drive the sheep home. I said we had to finish them, or Father would find them. We connected them, lit one end, and smoked. After a while, Sgrol ma yag cried and stopped smoking. I forced her to finish, and then we chewed some grass, which we thought would disguise the odor of the smoke. Later that night, she secretly told me that her tongue hurt and was burning. I had no idea what to do, so I told her to drink some cold water secretly to relieve the pain.

STARTING SCHOOL

I began attending Rta nag Primary School when I was six. One day at noon, one of my paternal cousins returned from school for lunch, so I asked about the school. He said it was very nice and described all the fun things he did there. After we finished eating, I went with him

to school. He said we were late when we got near, so he threw his backpack over the wall and pulled me over. Some students looked at me oddly when I entered the classroom with Cousin. Other students were chatting while others read. The teacher came with a book and a short stick and stood before us. Students stood up and said something together. I just sat comfortably until Cousin pulled me up. As the teacher talked, I looked out the window and noticed many children my age playing. I wanted to go out, but Cousin whispered that I couldn't until the teacher left. I waited and waited. Finally, the teacher left, and I hurried to join the playing children. I didn't realize how long I had played until my paternal grandfather came and said, "We looked for you everywhere. Our neighbor told us you left with your cousin. Don't do it again, OK? Let's go home now.

No! I don't want to leave. I want to stay here," I declared.

Grandfather didn't force me, so I stayed with Cousin that night at school.

The next morning, Grandfather brought a small PLA[22] bag for books and pens. He talked with the principal, who agreed I could stay. I was excited and joyful when Grandfather told me I could stay.

Children's Day (June first) came with activities such as dancing, singing, and sports like running, tug-of-war, etc. Students' parents came and were an attentive audience.

Teachers wanted me to participate in dance programs. Everything about dancing intoxicated me. I felt joyful when I danced in colorful, special clothing styles while leaping and spinning. Girls weren't expected to dance as energetically as the boys. I was proud of my dancing. When dancers from the county town song and dance troupe came and performed during festivals occasionally, I admired them and imagined I was one of them.

After primary school, most of my classmates moved to the County Town to attend junior high school. One sunny morning, Father and I boarded the local bus to register at the County Town. After we reached the school, Father asked the gatekeeper where to register. The gatekeeper pointed to a tall, magnificent building and said, "That building," in an old, hoarse voice.

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[22] People's Liberation Army.

We found many students lined up with their parents, when we got to the fourth floor of the building. In the early afternoon, we finished everything the teachers had asked us to do. Father escorted me back to the school and left after a meal together. When I returned to my dormitory, most students were preparing for evening self-study, which I had never heard of before. I followed them to the classroom, where we sat together and chatted. I was sitting in a corner with one of my dormmates when a teacher came and told us to introduce ourselves. The teacher, our head teacher, talked about school rules and classes.

We began seven days of military training the next day. I never had a chance to dance in middle school. What I remember most about the school is how I spent my weekends. I watched movies all day in a room for one *yuan*. During lunchtime, I ran back to school, ate with friends, and rushed to continue to watch movies until midnight and sometimes until the next morning.

My family had no TV at that time. We often borrowed DVDs and VCDs[23] from small stores and watched them at my cousins' homes. When I was at home during the day, our parents told us to watch our livestock and ordered us to bed early at night. At the place that showed films, in contrast, nobody disturbed us until it was time to pay a one-*yuan fee.*

DANCE SCHOOL IN ZI LING CITY

After two years of middle school, I had the opportunity to enroll in a dance school in Zi ling City. After participating in dance classes, I gradually realized that dance was not as easy as I had thought when I was a child. There was a lot of painful, hard training. When I practiced, the teacher watched, offering a stream of corrections. I felt tired and fed up, although I felt better when the teacher gave me a little credit for improving, but it was still hard. I secretly planned to leave and find another school to learn something easier, but I had no idea where to go. It was a sad time as I continued to make plans.

My family members were happy I could attend a dance school,

[23] Video Compact Disc.

believing this would lead to a good job four years later, encouraging me to persist. One week, two weeks, one month… training became part of my daily life, and I felt more comfortable. Sweat made me comfortable and cool. I loved Tibetan and Mongolian dances because the melodies made me restful and calm. The Mongolian music of Hexige[24] was wonderful and made me feel better when I was homesick. Sometimes, I lay in bed, imagining dancing to his slow melodies, which relaxed me.

I enjoyed my life in time, but eventually I graduated and had to leave. I moved to the Rma lho (Huangnan) Song and Dance Troupe, located in Reb gong (Tongren) Town, Rma lho Tibetan Autonomous Prefecture, Mtsho sngon Province, and began a new life, participating in performances in Taiwan, Beijing, and Shanghai. The way I evaluated dance was changing. Dance helped me enjoy music and colorful costumes and communicated my emotions and culture. The dancers who could truly transmit their feelings and identities to the audience were the ones I admired most. I wasn't nervous or tired when I tried to do the same thing.

I greatly admired Pad ma rgya mtsho,[25] who had his own dance troupe in Beijing. Every part of his dance made me feel comfortable and relaxed. *Snowland Heroes* is one of his works. He commented that the inspiration for this creation was an oil painting of a group of men wearing Tibetan robes walking together amid falling snowflakes that covered the sky, the land, and their robe collars. In this pure, quiet world, one man looks back with an innocent dark face and white teeth. The spirit of this painting reminded him of home and inspired him to create a new dance to express homesickness. I performed this dance with former classmates at my former school in December 2017. It was recorded for the 2018 Lunar New Year celebration.

In December 2012, a teacher advised me to go to Gor mo (Ge'ermu, Golmud) City, in the center of Mtsho sngon Province, where

[24] https://bit.ly/40EOL2E (11 August 2023).
[25] Founder of Beijing Wanma Dance Troupe, a member of the Chinese Dancers Association, and a professor at Northwest Nationalities University.

the salary was better than where I was working, so I moved and joined the Gor mo City Song and Dance Troupe. I appreciated the people I worked with. The weather was very dry, and there was little rain in summer, but this didn't disturb my work. I went home once a year during the winter holiday. My co-workers and teachers stressed that I had good basic dance skills and talent. However, I felt something was lacking in my life.

One day, two friends came to visit me in Gor mo. During a dinner together, they asked if I would take the college entrance examination. We talked a lot that night. I was confused and asked one of my leaders for advice. Finally, I decided to take the exam, reasoning that I could learn many things at university and would have many chances to improve myself. Getting a good job without a diploma is almost impossible, and I wanted to be a great dancer. I focused on preparing for the written and dance exams and borrowed preparation books from my friends. Having little background and understanding of math and geography, I left work and found a school to better prepare for the exam. I contacted a friend whose mother located a training school. With some friends, we moved and studied there for about three months. The teachers were Chinese, and the subjects were taught in Chinese. I had a hard time, especially with math. I left the training school and went home for several days, when the exam date was close. I also passed the dance exam in Zi ling at Mtsho sngon Normal University.

My friend and I rented a room in our County Town for four days. On the day of the exam, we got up early and took a taxi to the exam site. Before entering the rooms, guards checked every person. We could only bring ID cards and pens into the exam room. The first examination subject was math. I nervously guessed the answers. Two invigilators and a big camera in the corner recorded our every move. Many leaders repeatedly came into the room. Sometimes they checked our ID cards, making me more anxious. After the exam, I worried about what to do if I failed. A month later, I was notified I had passed. It was a very happy moment.

LIFE AT THE DANCE INSTITUTE OF NORTHWEST NATIONALITIES UNIVERSITY IN LAN GRU

The first time I met my classmates, we introduced ourselves. There were fifty-three students (eighteen males, thirty-five females). I felt great pressure at the beginning of the semester. My classmates were of different ethnic groups. We had classes in Chinese folk dance, dance psychology, dance education, ethnic folk dance, basic dance training, dance drama, ballet, classical dance, and modern dance.

In the second semester, ten women and ten men from our department joined a cultural exchange activity in Russia. I was chosen for this. After I returned, I began creating my own works, which received some awards, encouraging me to move forward.

Now in 2019, I work in an art troupe[26] in Shenzhen City, Guangdong Province, teaching performers. The audiences for performances include dancers, singers, and tourists. My job is to teach and perform twice a week and during festivals. I like my job, my colleagues, the weather, and the food. I meet many people from different places and learn a lot besides dance. I hope to improve and create my own works while living a simple life. Life is practice for who we are going to be.

[26] Shenzhen shi dongbu huaqiaocheng yishutuan.

FIG 75. Siblings. 'Brug lha rgyal (left) with Sgrol ma yag (center) and Klu mo tshe ring (right) (~1997, Bkra shis 'bum's home in Rta nag Township, Gser chen County, Mtsho sngon Province, unknown photographer).

FIG 76. 'Brug lha rgyal (center). My mother said I often went to the County Town with my Aunt Lha skyid yag and her husband, Rdo rje tshe brtan, when I was around five, I was an only son, so they spoiled me. My aunt's husband, whom we call A'ba 'father', bought my white hat. I rushed home to put on new clothes whenever they were preparing to go somewhere. An old Chinese photographer in our County Town took the photo. I am with my cousin's wife, 'Brug mo tshe ring (left), and a paternal cousin (G.yu mtsho rgyal, right) (~1995, Rta nag Township).

FIG 77. 'Brug lha rgyal (left), Dgra 'dul thar (b. ~1985, center), a local friend, and a cousin, Snying rtse rgyal (b. ~1987, right), pose for a photo in a studio in Chab cha Town, the capital of Mtsho lho Prefecture. When we were in middle school, we liked to go outside the school campus and eat with friends (~2004, unknown photographer).

FIG 78. 'Brug lha rgyal (3rd from left, front row) with classmates in Zi ling (2007, unknown photographer).

FIG 79. 'Brug lbha ryal (center), Bad ma rgyal (left), and Tshe b+ha (right). We took this picture on the way back to school after celebrating Teachers' Day (2007, photo studio in Zi ling).

FIG 80. 'Brug lha rgyal (left, 3rd row from the front) at Nadamu (2009, Rma lho (Henan) Mongolian Autonomous County, Rma lho Tibetan Autonomous Prefecture, Mtsho sngon Province, unknown photographer).

FIG 81. 'Brug lha rgyal (blue mask) Nuo opera (2010, Beijing, unknown photographer).

FIG 82. 'Brug lha rgyal (right), after participating in the 3rd Ethnic Minority Art Show, with a friend, Tshe ring rdo rje, in the Great Hall of the People (2010, Beijing, unknown photographer).

FIG 83. Fox-skin hats are taboo in my home area. I wore this hat shortly after a performance in Beijing (2010, unknown photographer).

FIG 84. 'Brug lha rgyal (second from left) "The Old Man" - a Tibetan opera (2010, Beijing, unknown photographer).

FIG 85. 'Brug lha rgyal (left, in black coat). With friends in Beijing (2010, unknown photographer).

FIG 86. 'Brug lha rgyal (left). After a performance with a friend, 'jam dbyangs tshe ring, in Beijing (2010, Beijing, unknown photographer).

FIG 87. 'Brug lha rgyal (pouring sand). "Sand Dance" (2013, Gor mo City).

FIG 88. 'Brug lha rgyal (with ax). "Dance fills my life with hope and dreams. Behind each achievement is a long train of pain. I never underestimate the power of practice" (2013, Gor mo City).

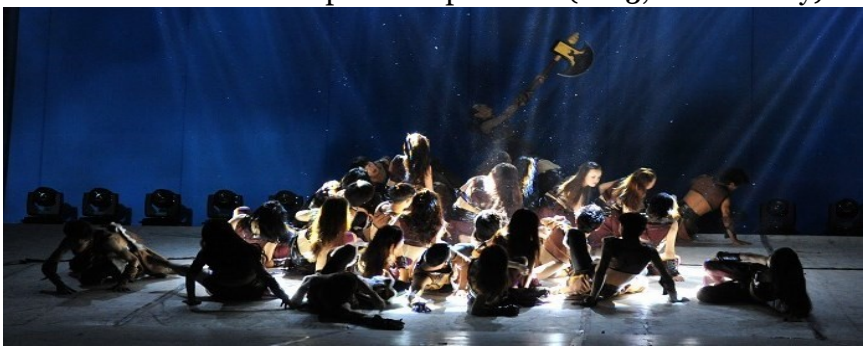


FIG 89. Rehearsal for a dance competition (December 2014, the Dance Institute of Northwest Nationalities University, unknown photographer).

FIG 90. 'Brug lha rgyal (2nd left, back row) with his college classmates (December 2014, the Dance Institute of Northwest Nationalities University, unknown photographer).

FIG 91. 'Brug lha rgyal (center) "Princess Wencheng" (October 2015, Beijing Mei Lanfang Theatre).

FIG 92. 'Brug lha rgyal "Princess Wencheng" (October 2015, Beijing Mei Lanfang Theatre).

FIG 93. 'Brug lha rgyal (left, Tang and Tibetan solders (October 2015, Beijing Mei Lanfang Theatre, screengrab from November 2019).

FIG 94. Mongolian dances are among my favorites. I love how they tell stories and convey emotions through movement. Whether it's a celebratory dance to mark a special occasion or a solemn dance to honor the spirits of the land, each performance is a unique expression of the culture and beliefs of the Mongolian people (2015, Lan gru City, unknown photographer).

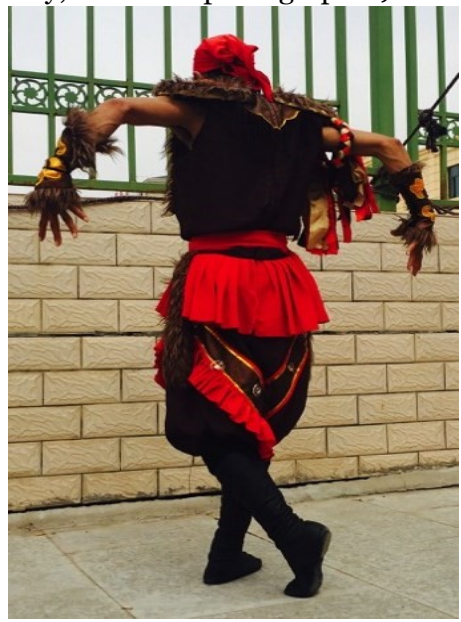


FIG 95. Dance is an essential part of my identity and has provided me with a sense of belonging and community no matter where I go and who I am with. Whether I'm dancing alone in my room or performing on stage with a group of strangers, the shared experience of movement and music reminds that we are all connected and that there is beauty in our diversity (2015, Rta nag Township).

FIG 96. 'Brug lha rgyal (center, right of older man). "Surround yourself with people you want to emulate" (2015, with classmates and teacher, the Dance Institute of Northwest Nationalities University, unknown photographer).

FIG 97. 'Brug lha rgyal (row 2, 2nd from right). Final exam. The caption reads Wudao xueyuan zhuanyeke qimo gongkai kaoshi huibao 'Dance Institute Professional Class Final Public Examination Report' (2016, the Dance Institute of Northwest Nationalities University, unknown photographer).

FIG 98. "You know if you do not practice for even one day. If you don't practice for two days, your peers know. If you don't practice for three days, the audience knows" (2016, Lan gru City, unknown photographer).

FIG 99. 'Brug lha rgyal (5th from right, 2nd row) with his soccer team (2016, Lan gru City, unknown photographer).

FIG 100. 'Brug lha rgyal (left front, standing). "Snowland Heroes" (2017, Lan gru City, unknown photographer).

PART THREE

TIBETAN WOMEN'S ORNAMENTS IN RGYAB LUNG COMMUNITY

I describe the generational uses, attitudes toward, and division of ornaments, particularly coral necklaces, by my family.

In about 2004, my parents paid one of my cousins to take them in his pick-up truck to the County Town to purchase candies, beverages, biscuits, and new clothing for the coming Lo sar. At dusk, after a long day of herding in the mountains, Brother and I tethered the yaks in the yak enclosure, drove our sheep back into the sheep enclosure, and then climbed to the top of the yak enclosure to watch for car lights, excitedly waiting for our parents. Meanwhile, Sister was cooking. Several cars passed before a car finally turned toward our house. We jumped down from the wall and ran to our house door and then to the car.

We took the boxes and plastic bags full of what our parents had bought from the car to our house. I took the light ones while Brother, Father, and Mother carried the heavy ones. After we finished, Cousin said his family members were waiting for him, and he had to leave. Father thanked him and gave him some cash.

Sister poured tea in bowls for my parents and then us. Next, she put a plate of beef on the table we sat around near the stove. We handed bowls of noodles to each of us. As we sat around the table, I grew even more eager to see what my parents had bought and had no interest in eating.

Father asked me to open a white plastic bag. I opened it and discovered a sheepskin robe with an ornamental *me cha* 'lighter' for my brother, a pair of silver earrings and a sheepskin robe for my sister, and a pair of shoes and a plush fabric robe for me.

Father told us to put on our new clothes. Sister and Brother were delighted with their new clothes and ornaments. Sister also had coral necklaces and Mother's *glo gzar* and *bzho bzung* for the upcoming Lo sar celebrations. I liked my new shoes and robe, but I felt it was unfair that my siblings had ornaments while I did not. When Lo sar Eve came, Sister and Brother wore their ornaments, which looked nice. I bravely asked Mother why I had none. Mother replied, "Children should be like children. They don't wear

ornaments like adults."

I yearned to grow up more quickly.

ORNAMENTS

Table 4. Images and descriptions of ornaments featured in the text. I present images and descriptions of the ornaments I refer to in this paper. I include photographs (presented in larger size later) to make it easier to visualize the ornaments, which are challenging to describe in English.

	The *bzho bzung* 'milk hook' is made of silver or copper and attached to a robe's front. According to locals, there are two sizes. The larger one is a decoration made of silver, and the smaller one is for holding a milk bucket when milking and is commonly made of copper.
	This *dmar gdan* has three red and black cloth strips on which about twenty silver bowls are attached to the bride's back as hair decorations. They may extend from the neck to the feet. Local women wear this during weddings. Before the bride enters the house, the women who offer tea to deities wear *dmar gdan*.
	The *dngul 'dzub* is a silver ring or a cone-shaped silver thimble-shaped decoration placed between coral beads to prevent abrasion and decorate the coral necklaces. Locally, bloodred coral is the most prized. *Byur rnying* 'old coral' is considered the best and most expensive, while *byu ru so ma* 'new coral' is comparatively inexpensive.
	Dung are silver, shell-shaped ornaments attached to *dmar gdan* that women wear on the back of their robes.

My mother wears this *shing ma mo'i mig* 'eye of the wooden ewe', a yellowish-brown carnelian with coral necklaces and prayer beads as a decoration. She maintains that coral with cracks or an appearance that suggests it was "eaten by insects" are more valuable than other coral because only real coral has cracks.

Locally, there are two types of *glo gzar*: (1) The *tshes risc can* is a silver, crescent moon above a sun decorated with coral hanging from the sash at the right or left hip. (2) The *char mgo ma* is a silver bow above a square decorated with coral and turquoise. Many local women no longer wear the large, heavy *glo gzar*. Less intricate, lighter ones are preferred.

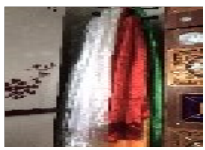
Ja la is red cloth fringe underneath *tsheg bstar* (FIG 25) and *dmar gdan*.

Rna lung 'earrings'. Round flat gold earrings were popular locally for many years. Today, most local women prefer to wear new-style earrings, as shown in this photograph.

Only a few local women wear a coral *skag bcings* 'belt' made of cloth and leather decorated with silver, coral, and turquoise. Instead, most wear silver *skag bcings,* as shown in this photograph.

Tsheg bstar are panels a woman wears above her waist on her back with hair. Locals generally think the larger a coral bead, the better. However, for making *tsheg bstar,* small beads are considered best.

Skying khab 'brocade'.



Kha btags are cloth strips representing purity and good fortune given to guests, religious personages, and others to show respect.

Local men and women wear *mchong* 'carnelian' (bottom center) in necklaces.

Decorative *me cha* 'lighters' are adornments worn by local men. Few local women wear *me cha*.

PERSONAL ACCOUNTS

The five accounts below are from my maternal grandmother, who comments on a Muslim who stayed for several days (~1960) in her home, secretly selling otter pelts and coral to locals, and describes ornaments during her daughter's engagement (~1970); my mother, who gives details on her ornaments both before and after her marriage; my sister's experience with ornaments before and after her marriage'; my experience with a necklace of coral beads from my mother's and maternal grandmother's necklaces, and local coral ownership practices.

ACCOUNT ONE: My maternal grandmother commented on a Muslim merchant who stayed with her family and the ornaments she received from her family before her marriage:

When I moved to your grandfather's home, my parents gave me a few small coral necklaces, a silver *tsheg bstar*, a *dmar gdan*, and several robes. My parents asked my husband's family for three coral necklaces during the engagement, but they just brought two.

In about 1960, your grandfather and I bought three coral necklaces from a Muslim merchant, who spent several days in our home secretly selling otter pelts and coral to locals. He gave fruits to my children, so they liked him. Before he left, he asked if we would like to exchange one yak for some big coral necklaces. I was excited about this, but my father-in-law disagreed.

ACCOUNT TWO: My maternal grandmother describes ornaments during her daughter's engagement:

In about 1970, my husband and I asked for four big coral necklaces for Sgrol ma mtsho. After one month, the groom's family brought two sheepskin robes, coral necklaces, silver earrings, and so on. Father-in-law asked his elder cousins to come and check if what they had brought was acceptable. Some of our neighbor women and I were disappointed with the coral necklaces because we had requested four, but they had brought only three. In the end, the older men

ignored our objections and were satisfied with what they had brought for my daughter, and they also agreed on an auspicious day for my daughter's wedding.

ACCOUNT THREE: My mother describes her ornaments before and after her marriage:

Before I married, my elder sister (Mtsho mo) and I didn't have our own coral necklaces, so we wore our mother's when necessary. However, we had our own *tsheg bstar*. The coral was Mother's, and the silver ornaments were ours. Mother bought the silver from a Muslim merchant during a local festival. We wore *tsheg bstar* and *ja la* that Mother made before Lo sar. I didn't see the coral necklaces, other ornaments, and robes my husband's side brought until my wedding day. I was never asked if I was satisfied. After I married, I had my own coral necklaces, coral *tsheg bstar*, and other ornaments. When I moved to my husband's home. Mother gave me some of her coral necklaces, a sheepskin robe, and a woolen hat.

ACCOUNT FOUR: I (Sgrol ma yag) describe my sister's experience with ornaments before and after her marriage.

When Klu mo tshe ring was eighteen, she married and moved into her husband's home. On the engagement day, the groom's side brought four boxes of Huzhu[27] liquor and thirteen large bolts of cloth, each of a different color. Cloth materials included wool, synthetic fabrics, and *skying khab* 'brocade'. Besides, 2,013 RMB was offered as part of the marriage proposal for Sister. My parents, paternal grandfather, and several elder cousins came and asked those who had come to provide three big coral necklaces, other ornaments, and several robes after *skyid sdug bcol ba*.[28]

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[27] Huzhu Tu (Mongghul, Monguor) Autonomous County, located in Haidong City, Mtsho sngon Province, is famous for barley liquor production.

[28] A time during the engagement process when the bride's family entrusts their daughter to the groom's family. The bride's parents

A month later, the groom's father communicated that they would bring what had been requested in two days. The groom's father and one of his cousins brought all that was required. However, they brought three old coral necklaces that belonged to the groom's mother.

When our cousins and neighbors came to inspect Sister's new robes and ornaments, the women focused on the coral necklaces, *tsheg bstar*, *skag bcings*, *and glo gzar*. Mother and the other women expressed disapproval. Grandfather sarcastically said it was a shame the daughter-in-law had taken all the mother-in-law's coral necklaces.

The groom's father apologized and elder cousins and promised to purchase new coral necklaces before the wedding. After several discussions, they agreed upon an auspicious date. However, no new coral necklaces were provided.

A few days before Sister's departure, Mother gave her one of her coral necklaces, two *dngul 'dzub*, and one of her *shing ma mo'i mig* that her mother had given her. At this time, Klu mo tshe ring had nine coral necklaces that our parents had bought from a Muslim businessman during a local festival in 2000 for 5,000 RMB. She thus had ten coral necklaces and two turquoise and carnelian necklaces. After the marriage, the groom's family gave my sister and her husband furniture, tents, and livestock, signifying that they were a new, independent family. This ended the issue of new coral necklaces. It would have been a significant financial burden on the newly married couple to purchase them.

ACCOUNT FIVE: One night before school, Mother commented on giving me a necklace with coral beads from her and my maternal grandmother's necklaces:

It's good that you have one string of coral, even if you never marry. I'm getting older, so wearing fewer coral necklaces is fine. I gave your sister some necklaces when she married. I don't know if your

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acknowledge their daughter's shortcomings and then ask the groom's side to promise not to abuse her physically or emotionally.

brother's future wife wants to wear coral necklaces. Other ornaments like *dmar gdan* and *glo gzar* might be yours if she doesn't. Young women look nice when they wear coral necklaces, and coral also has the power to protect you from disease.

Afterward, I[29] wore my necklace like an amulet until I went to live in a large city, joined a gym, and participated in group activities such as parties. City people noticed my coral necklace and asked questions, some of which made me uncomfortable, for example, about my ethnicity, birthplace, religious beliefs, political matters, etc. I stopped wearing it to avoid this, other than when I went to parties and other group activities where I knew there would be no awkward questions.

I never asked my parents, especially my mother, if this coral necklace belonged to our family or me. During the 2019 winter holiday, I forgot to wear my necklace when I went home. Mother noticed and asked what I had done with it. I explained that I had forgotten to wear it but that it was safe in my dormitory.

Mother said, "It's good for your well-being, but it's yours. It's up to you to do whatever you choose with it."

Most local women control the coral necklaces of their families. My mother makes the decisions about the division of coral necklaces in my family. For example, the night Mother gave me a coral necklace, she made the decision herself, and did not ask Father. In contrast, Mother often deferred to Father. For example, a neighbor's daughter met my sister in the mountains while they were herding and invited her and some other young people to an overnight gathering in her home. She explained that her parents would not be there. Sister asked Mother to talk to Father and request permission for her to attend the gathering. Eventually, permission was granted, and Sister joyfully joined them.

[29] Sgrol ma yag.

TRANSFER OF ORNAMENTS

There are no fixed rules about giving ornaments to children. This is especially true for mothers. I have two examples of this. First, when children leave their parents to marry, they are no longer part of their parents' family. Parents give livestock, clothes, and ornaments as gifts to the child who is marrying and leaving home. They also ask the groom or bride's family to buy clothing and ornaments for their children, such as sheepskin robes, woolen robes, and coral necklaces. Clothing and ornaments signal a family's social status. They request less if a child's future family is poor. For instance, when one of my paternal cousins married in 2019, her family requested few clothes and ornaments for her, knowing her husband's family did not have much livestock or other property.

Second, mothers with unmarried daughters are usually older and inclined to wear fewer ornaments themselves, so they may give some of their ornaments to their daughters. For example, my paternal cousin, Bsod nams bde skyid, who married in 2019, has two siblings who are also married. Their mother has given all her ornaments to the three of them. However, though my mother plans to give her ornaments to my brother and me, she remains fond of them and continues to wear them.

CONCLUSION

Grandmother told me that in about 2003, she spent approximately 5,000 RMB on coral necklaces for one of her daughters before she married. In 2019, one of my uncles paid around 12,000 RMB for three coral necklaces for his son's bride. Mother and my family's neighbor women agree that, while genuine coral is valuable, fashionable, and protects against illness, there are few occasions to wear coral. Locally, women and men only participate in two big festivals - Lo sar and the fifth lunisolar month's fifteenth day. Women often cannot attend because they are busy or rules limit festival participation, e.g., it is taboo to participate in many social events after a relative's death for

specified lengths of time.

Local women think just one or two coral necklaces are fine and that imitation coral necklaces are better because they are stylish, attractive, and cheap. These ongoing changes indicate that social value and practices regarding coral are increasingly fluid, especially with widespread access to social media that impacts what is considered trendy and the availability of low-priced, imitation products that closely resemble authentic coral.

FIG 101. *Glo gzar char mgo ma* (2020, Rgyab lung Community, Sgrol ma yag).

FIG 102. *Glo gzar tshes ris can* (2020, Rgyab lung Community, Sgrol ma yag).

FIG 103. Bsod nams bde skyid wears a *dmar gdan* on her wedding day (2019, Rgyab lung Community, Sgrol ma yag).

FIGS 104 & 105. (L) A Chinese metalsmith made this *rna lung* before Mother married (2020, Rgyab lung Community, Sgrol ma yag). (R) *Ja la* (2020, Rkang tsha County, Bsod nams bde skyid).

FIGS 106 & 107. (L) I wear my coral necklace (2017, Xi'an City, 'Jams dbyangs skyabs). (R) Mkha' mo yag wears her coral necklaces and gold earrings during Lo sar (2020, at her home in Rgyab lung Community, Mkha' mo yag).

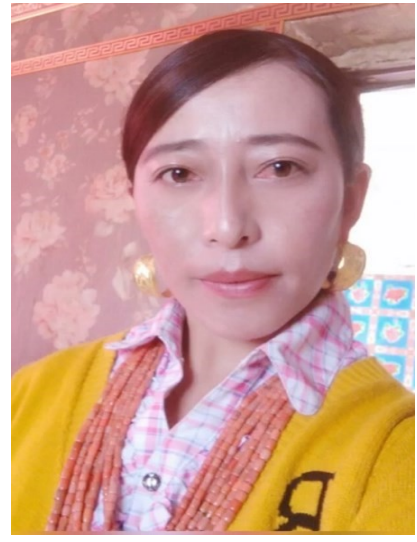

FIG 108. Mother made this coral *skag bcings* for me before Children's Day (1 June), when I was in primary school (2020, Rgyab lung Community, Sgrol ma mtsho).

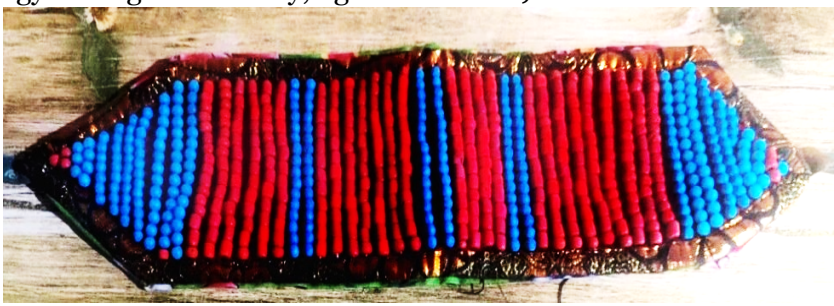

FIG 109. Mother's coral *skag bcings*. Many young women - myself included - avoid wearing coral *skag bcings* because it is old-fashioned. However, Mother thinks coral *skag bcings* are beautiful. She has changed the shape of this particular *skag bcings* several times (2020, Rgyab lung Community, Sgrol ma mtsho).

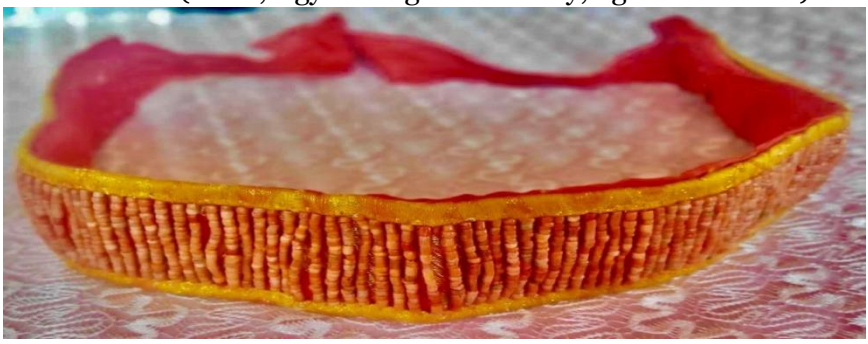

FIG 110. I wear my mother's *dmar gdan*. When Grandmother saw this photograph, she commented, "It isn't very attractive because you have short hair and no braids" (2019, at my home in Rgyab lung Community, Sgrol ma mtsho).

FIG 111. When Mother married, my paternal grandmother gave her this *dmar gdan* (made by a Chinese metalsmith). Most local mothers give their *dmar gdan* to a special child, for example, the oldest son's wife, the youngest son's wife, or a daughter who marries and stays at home with her parents. My father's older sister said her parents gave this *dmar gdan* to my father for my mother because he is the youngest child, who stayed with my paternal grandparents - his parents (2019, Rgyab lung Community, Sgrol ma yag).

FIG 112. Klu mo tshe ring wears coral necklaces and her mother's *bzho bzung* and *glo gzar* (~2003, unidentified photo studio in Rta nag ma Township town, unknown photographer).

FIG 113. Imitation-coral ornaments for sale before Lo sar (2018, Gser chen County Town, Sgrol ma yag).

FIG 114. *Dung* (2019, Rgyab lung Community, Sgrol ma yag).

FIG 115. Klu mo tshe ring during a local festival on the fifteenth day of the fifth month. She *khrid pa* 'eloped'[30] the night of the fourteenth day of the fifth month. Consequently, her braids featured one blue and one white *kha btags*, signifying that she had eloped (~2006, unknown photo studio in Rta nag ma Township Town, unknown photographer).

[30] Locally, when a daughter elopes and goes to her groom's home, the groom's family asks three women to make braids for the bride. Elder men representing the groom apologize to the bride's family when they escort her back to her parents' home the next morning.

FIG 116. Sgrol ma mstho wears an imitation coral necklace during Lo sar (2020, Rgyab lung Community, Sgrol ma yag).

FIG 117. Klu mo tshe ring wears a coral *skag bcings* her husband made. The ornaments are hers. She also wears a *dmar gdan* because it is the day of her husband's cousin's wedding. That day, she offered tea to deities (2017, at her home in Rgyab lung Community, Tshe ring lhun 'grub).

FIGS 118 & 119. (L) Above the turquoise, the yellow bead is the *shing ma mo'i mig* that Mother gave Sister (2020, Rgyab lung Community, Tshe ring lhun 'grub). (R) *Dngul 'dzub* 'thimble-shaped silver ornament' (2020, Rgyab lung Community, Tshe ring lhun 'grub).

FIGS 120 & 121. (L) Coral *rna lung* I bought for 300 RMB from a Tibetan merchant in Gser chen County. He told me the coral was from Nepal (2020, Xi'an City, Sgrol ma yag). (R) My coral necklace (2020, Xi'an City, Sgrol ma yag).

FIG 122. *Tsheg bstar* were once worn in my home area. My mother also dressed this way during weddings and festivals. Fashion changes, and women (including my mother and sister) no longer wear *tsheg bstar*. Mother said she quit wearing *tsheg bstar* in about 2009, after a horse race festival, because a *bla ma* advised women who wore *tsheg bstar* to stop because it was a bad sign for humans to wear ornaments that resembled a demon's coral wings. Mother then used the coral from the *tsheg bstar* to make coral *skag bcings* (2020, image created by Sgrol ma yag).

FIG 123. Tshe ring gnam lha (left) wore his *skying khab* 'brocade' robe during his paternal cousin's (Bsod nams bde skyid, right) wedding. Bsod nams bde skyid wears her *dmar gdan*, *skag bcngs*, *glo gzar*, and coral necklaces. Hanging from her right side is a decorative r*gyab dar* 'different colors of sashes with an Endless Knot decoration in the center and hung from the back' (2019, Bsod nams bde skyid's home in Rgyab lung Community, unknown photographer).

FIG 124. Bsod nams bde skyid (left) wears her new *glo gzar* and *skag bcings* as she stands with her husband after moving to his home. Many local women wear new style *glo gzar* and *skag bcings* (2019, Rkang tsha County, unknown photographer).

FIG 125. Mother's imitation coral necklace. Mother and neighbor women comment that many locals no longer wear robes and ornaments as in the past, except during festivals and Lo sar celebrations. They add that excessive cash was once spent on coral and other ornaments, but today, imitation coral necklaces are cheap and beautiful. Consequently, there is no need to worry about losing them or if they are stolen because they are cheap. Most imitation coral beads are spherical (2020, Xi'an City, Sgrol ma yag).

FIG 126. Bsod nams bde skyid wears her mother's coral *skag bcings* during Lo sar (2020, Rkang tsha County Town, unknown photographer).

FIG 127. A few years ago, my parents bought this *me cha* for my brother for Lo sar but gave it to me later, because it was too small for a man, and bought a bigger one for Brother. I wore it during Lo sar until I decided it was a man's ornament (2020, Rgyab lung Community, Sgrol ma yag).

FIGS 128 & 129. (L) Mother's silver *ska bcings* that she purchased in Gser chen County Town for about 900 RMB in 2018. She wears it during Lo sar and on pilgrimage because it is light and simple (2020, Rgyab lung Community, Sgrol ma yag). (R) Mother's silver ring from one of her brothers. She took it with clothes and ornaments that her family gave her when she moved to my father's home. A turquoise bead was in the center. She lost it and replaced it with a coral bead. She enjoyed wearing it during local horse races and the days of Lo sar (2020, Rgyab lung Community, Sgrol ma yag).

FIG 130. *Skying khab* 'brocade' for sale in the County Town (2018, Gser chen County Town, Sgrol ma yag).

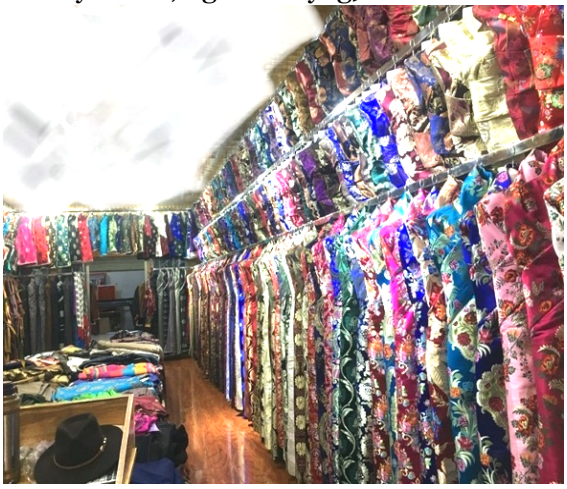

FIG 131. One or two *tsheg bstar* may be worn. *Tsheg bstar* often consists of lines of varying numbers of coral and turquoise (not affixed in this photograph) framed in cloth. A silver *tsheg bstar* 'silver panel' consists of small round flat silver discs framed in cloth. Local women wore *tsheg bstar* during Lo sar, at weddings, on the fifth month's fifteenth day, and at other festivals. Bsod nams bde skyid's mother made the *tsheg bstar* in the photograph, when Bsod nams bde skyid was a child. It featured cloth fringes and small metal bells, we call this *bsgrig gdan*. It featured *gyung drung* 'swastika'[31] on the edges. A plastic flower is at the bottom center (2019, Bsod nams bde skyid).

CONCLUSION

My family's livestock significantly influenced our dietary habits, clothing, transportation, and social interactions. I am grateful to my parents for providing a remarkable life for us. Both of my parents did not receive a formal education, and both were raised in traditional households. Unlike their parents, they have not dictated their children's choices regarding marriage or education. Under their guidance, we acquired skills in engaging with our

[31] See https://www.pinterest.nz/pin/750271619165276086/, 23 May 2023.

livestock and the land we inhabit and fostering meaningful connections with neighbors. As herding possibilities decline locally, community members better appreciate the preciousness of our livestock. A paternal relative working as a street cleaner and living in the township town with her husband commented that obtaining fuel is a problem without livestock. While my family was in the spring pasture, she came to our home to collect yak dung and pile it near my family's yak enclosure, planning to take it to her family when it dried.

My home area has experienced rapid changes in the last few years, accelerated by tourism, weather fluctuations, new policies, and Internet access, affecting local people's lifestyles and aesthetic standards. When I was a child, local women wore heavy large ornaments and hair ornaments during festivals, and women's robe collars were also different from men's. Today, men and women wear robes with the same collar, and local women no longer wear old-style ornaments. New and lighter ornaments have replaced them. Local young women wear robes and ornaments that are popular on social media.

In recent years, wherever you meet a local herder in my home area, the first conversation topics are the shortage of grass, grassland protection policies, and the uncertain future life with their livestock. In 2022, many local households, including my family, sold most of their livestock. There are also other reasons beyond the changes I mentioned above, such as children being required to attend school and who may work to earn income for the family or themselves in urban areas after leaving school. As a result, the family has fewer people to herd, so they herd fewer livestock.

Table 5. Yaks

Name	Description	Age Years (male)	Age Years (female)	Polled/ Horned
'bri	female yaks		4 or older	either
thul ma	female yaks		3- to 4-year-old	either
Ya ru	general term for calves	1- to 2-year-old		either
Yar mo	general term for female calves		1- to 2-year-old	either
g.yag	general term for castrated	4 or older		either
bag rdi or bag phrug	uncastrated	3 or older		either
sngo rdu ma	blue female yak		5+ or older	polled
dung mgo ma	white head female yak		5 or older	horned
mgon g.yag	sacred yak of Mgon gon	15 or older *gyag*		horned
g.yag dkar ldang	white male yak	six or older *gyag*		horned
rgya tho ma	brown female yak		3-year-old	polled
sre tho ma	spotty female yak		15 or older	polled
dkar dris ma	white female yak		13 or older	polled
rgya ling ma	brown female yak		4	horned

rgya ring ma	brown female yak		15 or older	polled
'dzi mo	white-blazed forehead		10 or older	horned
gwa tho ma	white-blazed face		4	polled
rnga lo ma	short-tailed female yak		5	horned
nag log ma	thick black hair and big-headed female yak		4	polled
mtshe ge ma	Twin mother		5 or older	polled
srung rtags ma	two curled braids in her mane		4-year-old	horned
gwa ldang ma	white-headed female yak		15 or older	horned
rog ldang ma	black female yak		14 or older	horned
sre tho	spotty-headed yak	4-year-old		polled
gwa ling	white-headed yak	5-year-old		horned

Table 6. Horses

Name	Description	Age (male)	Age (female)
rta	general term for horses		
rta nag ldang	black	28 or older	
rgod ma rkyang dmar ma	light brown and reddish brown		15 or older
rgye'u nag ril	black	3 or older	
rkyang ldang	light brown		17 or older

Table 7. Sheep

Name	Description	Age (Female)	Horn/Polled
kham gzhis ma	brown head	5 or older	horned
khya gzhis ma	black around the eyes	5 or older	horned
khya gzhis ma	black around the eyes	5 or older	horned (a bit straight up)
rgya brgyang ma	brown around the eyes	5 or older	horned
smug tho ma	black head	5 or older	polled

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'brong tsha འབྲོང་ཚ།
'brug gi chu 'thung ba འབྲུག་གི་ཆུ་འཐུང་བ།
'brug kho འབྲུག་ཁོ།
'brug lha rgyal འབྲུག་ལྷ་རྒྱལ།
'brug mo tshe ring འབྲུག་མོ་ཚེ་རིང་།
'bum khang འབུམ་ཁང་།
'dzi mo འཛི་མོ།
'go be'u འགོ་བེའུ།
'gyo ma འགྱོ་མ།
'jam dbyangs don 'grub འཇམ་དབྱངས་དོན་འགྲུབ།
'jam dbyangs tshe ring འཇམ་དབྱངས་ཚེ་རིང་།
'jams dbyangs skyabs འཇམས་དབྱངས་སྐྱབས།
'phags log འཕགས་ལོག
'phags mo rdo rje འཕགས་མོ་རྡོ་རྗེ།
a ce 'brug mo ཨ་ཅེ་འབྲུག་མོ།
a khu rgyal mtshan ཨ་ཁུ་རྒྱལ་མཚན།
a mchog a b+ha ཨ་མཆོག་ཨ་ཧཱ།
a mdo ཨ་མདོ།
a pha lhu kho ཨ་ཕ་ལྷུ་ཁོ།
a rdo ཨ་རྡོ།
bag ldu rgya ling བག་ལྡུ་རྒྱ་ལིང་།
bdud shul kha ra བདུད་ཞུལ་ཁ་ར།
bkra shis 'bum བཀྲ་ཤིས་འབུམ།
bla ma ཟླ་མ།
blo ldan བློ་ལྡན།
bo mo thar བོ་མོ་ཐར།
brag mchog ཁྲག་མཆོག
bsang khri བསང་ཁྲི།
bsgrig gdan བསྒྲིག་གདན།
bshad sgrub dar rgyas gling བཤད་སྒྲུབ་དར་རྒྱས་གླིང་།
bsod nams bde skyid བསོད་ནམས་བདེ་སྐྱིད།
bstan pa tshe ring བསྟན་པ་ཚེ་རིང་།

bum pa བུམ་པ།
bzho bzung བཞོ་བཟུང་།
chab cha ཆབ་ཅ།
chags 'jog pa ཆགས་འཇོག་པ།
char mgo ma ཆར་མགོ་མ།
chos bgegs ཆོས་བགེགས།
chos rtsig ཆོས་རྩིག
chu dpar ཆུ་དཔར་
chu lam ཆུ་ལམ།
D+hiH tsha ཌྷིཿཚ།
dga' ba khar bskus ni དགའ་བ་ཁར་བསྐུས་ནི།
dga' dga' ra skyid skyid la 'dug dgo དགའ་དགའ་ར་སྐྱིད་སྐྱིད་ལ་འདུག་དགོ།
dgo dgo dgo དགོ་དགོ་དགོ།
dgon pa rgyal དགོན་པ་རྒྱལ།
dgra 'dul thar དགྲ་འདུལ་ཐར།
dmar gdan དམར་གདན།
dngul 'dzub དངུལ་འཛུབ།
dom phrug དོམ་ཕྲུག
dpa' lung དཔའ་ལུང་།
dpa' tho དཔའ་ཐོ།
dpal 'dzin དཔལ་འཛིན།
dpal ldan lha mo དཔལ་ལྡན་ལྷ་མོ།
dung mgo ma དུང་མགོ་མ།
dung དུང་།
g.yag rgan dkar ldang གཡག་རྒན་དཀར་ལྡང་།
g.yang 'dzin གཡང་འཛིན།
g.yang chen གཡང་ཆེན།
g.yang ra གཡང་ར།
g.yu mtsho rgyal གཡུ་མཚོ་རྒྱལ།
glang ma གླང་མ།
glo gzar གློ་གཟར།
gnam skyid yag གནམ་སྐྱིད་ཡག
go 'dabs གོ་འདབས།
go snyod གོ་སྣྱོད།

go tog གོ་ཏོག
gor mo གོར་མོ།
gser chen གསེར་ཆེན།
gtor ma གཏོར་མ།
gu bde skyid གུ་བདེ་སྐྱིད།
gwa ldang ma གྭ་ལྡང་མ།
gwa ling གྭ་ལིང་།
gwa tho ma གྭ་ཐོ་མ།
ha lung ཧ་ལུང་།
hu tse ཧུ་ཙེ།
ja la ཇ་ལ།
ja mchod ཇ་མཆོད།
ja phud ཇ་ཕུད།
jo skor dgon ཇོ་སྐོར་དགོན།
jo skor ཇོ་སྐོར།
kar la ཀར་ལ།
kha btags ཁ་བཏགས།
kham gzhis ma ཁམ་གཞིས་མ།
kho b+he' ཁོ་བྷེ།
kho shog ཁོ་ཤོག
khon skyabs thar ཁོན་སྐྱབས་ཐར།
khrid pa ཁྲིད་པ།
khya gzhis ma ཁྱ་གཞིས་མ།
khyi tshe lo dgu ཁྱི་ཚེ་ལོ་དགུ།
klo'u rgan, rkun thus ཀླུའུ་རྒན། ཀུན་ཐུས།
klu 'bum rgyal ཀླུ་འབུམ་རྒྱལ།
klu mo tshe ring ཀླུ་མོ་ཚེ་རིང་།
klu mo ཀླུ་མོ།
klu mtsho skyid ཀླུ་མཚོ་སྐྱིད།
kun mtsho yag ཀུན་མཚོ་ཡག
lab tse ལབ་ཙེ།
lan gru ལན་གྲུ།
lci leb སྐྱེ་ལེབ།
lha mo 'od zer can ma ལྷ་མོ་འོད་ཟེར་ཅན་མ།

lha mo'i bskang ba ལྷ་མོའི་བསྐང་བ།
lha skyid yag ལྷ་སྐྱིད་ཡག
lhu kho ལྷུ་ཁོ།
lo sar ལོ་སར།
mA rI ts+ye སྨ་རི་རྩེ།
mchod kha མཆོད་ཁ།
mchod me མཆོད་མེ།
mchod pa bshams pa མཆོད་པ་བཤམས་པ།
mchod pa phyags pa མཆོད་པ་ཕྱགས་པ།
mchong མཆོང་།
me cha མེ་ཆ།
mgon g.yag མགོན་གཡག
mgon po མགོན་པོ།
mgon rgan མགོན་རྒན།
mkha' mo yag མཁའ་མོ་ཡག
mo ba མོ་བ།
mo nyog མོ་ཉོག
mtshe ge ma མཚེ་གེ་མ།
mtsher sa མཚེར་ས།
mtsho lho མཚོ་ལྷོ
mtsho sngon po མཚོ་སྔོན་པོ།
mtsho sngon མཚོ་སྔོན།
nag tho ma ནག་ཐོ་མ།
nas brngo ba ནས་བརྩོ་བ།
nor bu g.yu rgyal ནོར་བུ་གཡུ་རྒྱལ།
nor rdang ནོར་དྲང་།
nor rtags can ནོར་རྟགས་ཅན།
nyin 'breng ཉིན་འབྲེང་།
nyog ཉོག
oM mA ri ts+ye+e maM swA ha ཨོཾ་སྨ་རི་རྩེ་ཧཱུྃ་སྭཱ་ཧཱ།
ong spungs ཨོང་སྤུངས།
pad ma rgya mtsho པད་མ་རྒྱ་མཚོ།
pad ma rgyal པད་མ་རྒྱལ།
pad ma tshe ring པད་མ་ཚེ་རིང་།

pan zhi བན་ཞི།
phyogs bzhi'i dgra non dgo ཕྱོགས་བཞིའི་དགྲ་རྣོན་དགོ།
phyugs khra khra'i rnga thag ring dgo ཕྱུགས་ཁྲ་ཁྲའི་རྔ་ཐག་རིང་དགོ།
ra 'khyog ར་འཁྱོག
ra ba dpal mkhar ར་བ་དཔལ་མཁར།
rang yul gad pa yin rung skyid རང་ཡུལ་གད་པ་ཡིན་རུང་སྐྱིད།
rdo kho རྡོ་ཁོ
rdo rje tshe brtan རྡོ་རྗེ་ཚེ་བརྟན།
reb gong རེབ་གོང་།
rgya brgyang ma རྒྱ་བརྒྱང་མ།
rgya ling རྒྱ་ལིང་།
rgya rgya mig bzhi རྒྱ་རྒྱ་མིག་བཞི
rgya rus རྒྱ་རུས།
rgya tho ma རྒྱ་ཐོ་མ།
rgyab dar རྒྱབ་དར།
rgyab lung རྒྱབ་ལུང་།
rgyal mtshan རྒྱལ་མཚན།
rgyal sras རྒྱལ་སྲས།
rgye'u nag ldang རྒྱེའུ་ནག་ལྡང་།
ri bsang རི་བསང་།
rkang tsha རྐང་ཚ།
rkun thus ma རྐུན་ཐུས་མ།
rkyang ldang ma རྐྱང་ལྡང་མ།
rkyang ldang རྐྱང་ལྡང་།
rkyang rtsebs རྐྱང་རྩེབས།
rma lho རྨ་ལྷོ།
rna lung ན་ལུང་།
rnga lo ma ཅ་ལོ་མ།
rnga mar bskus ni ཅ་མར་བསྐུས་ནི།
rnga rgan ཅ་རྒན།
rta nag ma རྟ་ནག་མ།
rta nag རྟ་ནག
rta rgan nag ldang རྟ་རྒན་ནག་ལྡང་།
rtsam pa རྩམ་པ།

rtswa srung རྩ་སྲུང་།
rul ma རུལ་མ།
sa dpar ས་དཔར།
sangs rgyas sman bla'i dus chen སངས་རྒྱས་སྨན་བླའི་དུས་ཆེན།
sgo སྒོ
sgro b+ha སྒྲོ་སྦྱ།
sgo bsang སྒོ་བསང་།
sgro sgro སྒྲོ་སྒྲོ
sgrol ma mtsho སྒྲོལ་མ་མཚོ།
sgrol ma yag སྒྲོལ་མ་ཡག
sgron mtsho སྒྲོན་མཚོ།
sha thum ཤ་ཐུམ།
shing ma mo'i mig ཤིང་མ་མོའི་མིག
skar ma a brtan rgyal por bcol pa སྐར་མ་ཨ་བརྟན་རྒྱལ་པོར་བཙོལ་བ།
skyabs 'gro སྐྱབས་འགྲོ།
skyid sdug bcol ba སྐྱིད་སྡུག་བཙོལ་བ།
skying khab སྐྱིང་ཁབ།
smug tho ma སྨུག་ཐོ་མ།
sngo ldu ma སྔོ་ལྡུ་མ།
snying dkar rgyal སྙིང་དཀར་རྒྱལ།
snying rtse rgyal སྙིང་རྩེ་རྒྱལ།
spen ma སྤེན་མ།
sre tho ma སྲེ་ཐོ་མ།
sre tho སྲེ་ཐོ།
srung kha gso ba སྲུང་ཁ་གསོ་བ།
srung ma སྲུང་མ།
srung rtags སྲུང་རྟགས།
srung rtags ma སྲུང་རྟགས་མ།
sug bzhi'i khar bskus ni སུག་བཞིའི་ཁར་བསྐུས་ནི།
thal spungs ཐལ་སྤུངས།
thal thum ཐལ་ཐུམ།
theb rgya ཐེབ་རྒྱ།
theg chen chos 'khor gling ཐེག་ཆེན་ཆོས་འཁོར་གླིང་།
ting phor ཏིང་ཕོར།

tsha gsur ཚ་གསུར།
tsha tsha ཚ་ཚ།
tshe b+ha ཚེ་བྷ།
tshe brtan rgyal ཚེ་བརྟན་རྒྱལ།
tshe gzungs ཚེ་གཟུངས།
tshe le ཚེ་ལེ།
tshe ring gnam lha ཚེ་རིང་གནམ་ལྷ།
tshe ring lhun 'grub ཚེ་རིང་ལྷུན་འགྲུབ།
tshe ring rdo rje ཚེ་རིང་རྡོ་རྗེ།
tshe thar la btang ཚེ་ཐར་ལ་བཏང་།
tshe thar ཚེ་ཐར།
tsheg bstar ཚེག་བསྟར།
tshes ris can ཚེས་རིས་ཅན།
yos brngo ba ཡོས་བརྗོ་བ།
yos sa ཡོས་ས།
zhi la ser ril ཞི་ལ་སེར་རིལ།
zi ling ཟི་ལིང་།

CHINESE TERMS

Aque Awa 阿却阿哇
Beijing 北京
Beijing wanma wudao ju tuan 北京完玛舞蹈剧团
Geermu shi gewu tuan 格尔木市歌舞团
Gansu 甘肃
Gonghe 共和
Hainan 海南
Hexige 贺西格
Huangnan 黄南
Huangnan gewu tuan 黄南歌舞团
Lanzhou 兰州
Mei Lanfang Dajuyuan 梅兰芳大剧院
Nadamu 那达慕
Nuowu 傩舞

Qinghai 青海
Shanghai 上海
Shawu 沙舞
Shenzhen shi dongbu huaqiaocheng yishutuan 深圳市东部华侨城艺术团
Chengdu 成都
Datong 大通
Gangcha 刚察
Garila 尕日拉
Ge'ermu 格尔木
Gonghe 共和
Guide 贵德
Haidong 海东
Hainan 海南
Han 汉
Heimahe 黑马河
Hualong 化隆
Huangyuan 湟源
Huangzhong 湟中
Hui 回
Huzhu 互助
Jialong 加隆
Jianzha 尖扎
Jiaoshikesi 角什科寺
Lawa Huangke 拉哇黄科
Ledu 乐都
Manjing 蟎净
Menyuan 门源
Minhe 民和
Minzu 民族
Ping'an 平安
Qiabuqia 恰不恰
Qinghai 青海
Quzou 曲奏

Ranhuqu 然乎去
Salar, Sala 撒拉
Shinaihai 石乃亥
Sichuan 四川
Taiwan 台湾
Tongren 同仁
Wudao xueyuan zhuanyeke qimo gongkai kaoshi huibao 舞蹈学院专业课期末公开考 试汇报
Tiebuja 铁布加
Tu 土
Wenba 文巴
Xi'an 西安
Xining 西宁
Xunhua 循化
Yanan 延安
RMB 人民币
Zhihuqu 直乎去
Zhizha 支扎